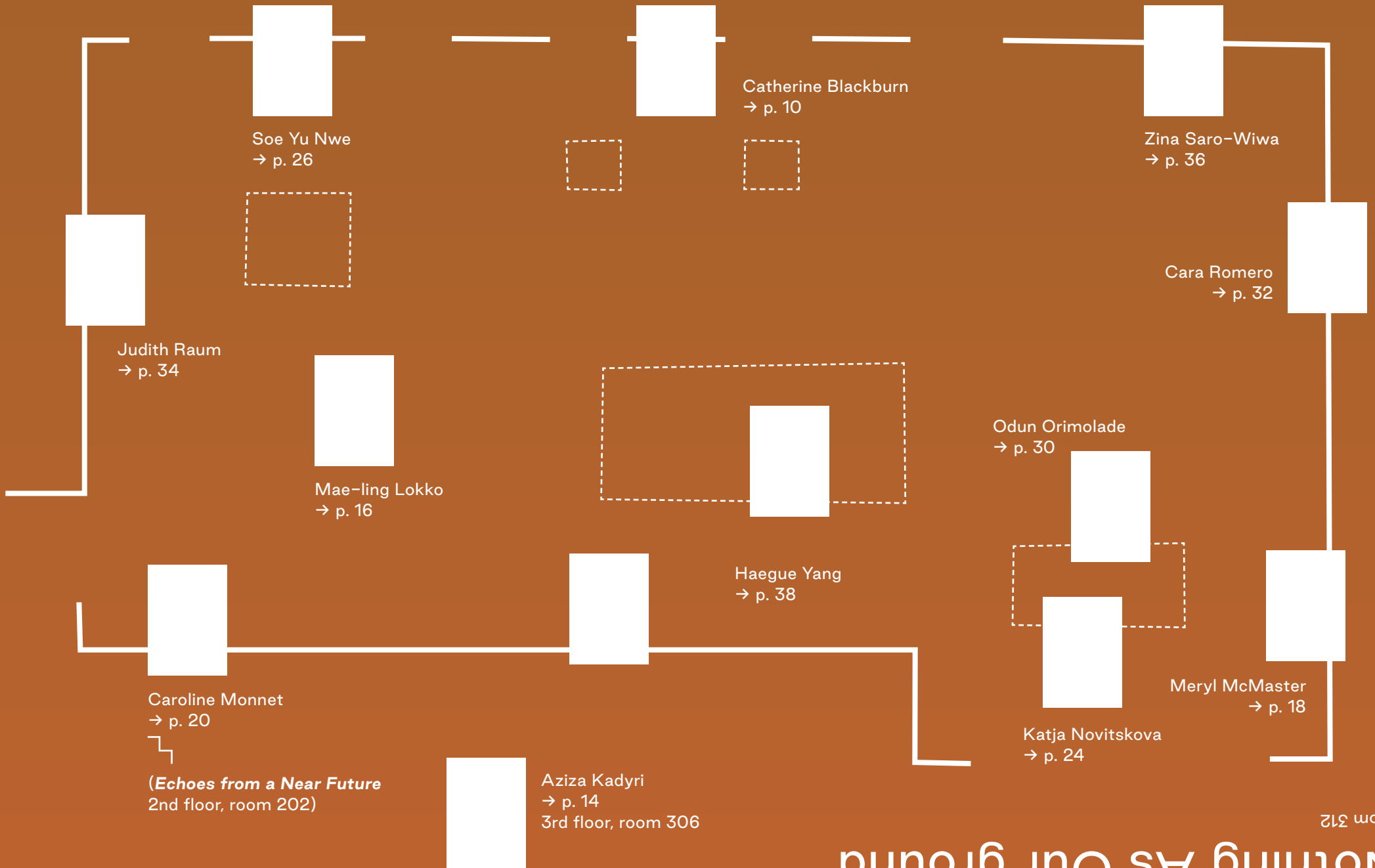


Making

Kin

Making Kin

Room 304



Nothing As Our ground

Room 312

Twelve artists from nine countries embark on an experimental, research-based quest to unearth ancient knowledge and shamanic practices, celebrate their grandmothers, forge gentle bonds with buffaloes, harness the spiritual technology of masks to fight environmental destruction, construct unusual assemblages using building materials, and listen to the silence of the trees. In the diaries of their ancestors, they discover traces of resilience and survival. They (digitally) revive techniques used in crafts and identify encoded knowledge in the fine meshwork of geometric patterns. They speculate on the transformative potential of fungal mycelium and seek to translate invisible forces – quanta or spiritual beings – into visual forms. Using delicate colours, they tell of the failure of a loving relationship between animals and humans and reflect on the limits of biotechnology. Eclectic beings made of steel and artificial straw create new constellations; glazed ceramics extend the circle of kinship to embrace a well and a tree.

Making Kin brings together the works of artists from Canada, South Korea, Nigeria, Ghana, Myanmar, Germany, Estonia, Uzbekistan, and the US. Their various practices are interconnected by the understanding that we are all woven into a dynamic fabric of relationships: not only with other people, animals, plants, spiritual beings, and the cosmos – but also

with our office chairs. This relational world view is linked to criticism of (colonial) regimes of violence and exploitation as well as state ideologies that reduce the diversity of relationships to models based on the nuclear family and to rigid forms of belonging. The artists resist the loss of connections, knowledge, biodiversity, languages and aesthetics and counter it with an exploration of marginalized forms of knowledge and relationship. There are four central themes: belonging and community; entanglements between human and non-human collectives; the revitalization and passing on of devalued knowledge cultures; and cultural memory and intergenerational exchange. The transcultural diversity of the artistic approaches turns the exhibition space into a pluriverse and invites visitors to weave their own connections.

Background to the exhibition

“In relation every subject is an object and every object a subject.”
Édouard Glissant

The title *Making Kin* is a reference to Donna Haraway, who explores how closely we are intertwined with other living beings and how we can develop new forms of coexistence by acknowledging this connection. She emphasizes that we have never been just human, arguing that our bodies have always contained genomes from bacteria,

fungi, and other living beings that make our lives possible in the first place. Haraway's work is part of the Multispecies Turn in the humanities, to which researchers from the Global South have contributed significantly. This turn is closely linked to another shift in academia and the arts that is shaping a transdisciplinary, relationship-based worldview. Caribbean cultural theorist Édouard Glissant was a key thinker in contemporary conceptualizations of relationality in biological, social, and cultural terms. Drawing on the history of the transatlantic slave trade and the archipelagic geography of the Caribbean islands, he formulated his critique of Western-centric and essentialist concepts of identity. For Glissant, the violent mixing of cultures gave rise to a new practice of social coexistence. This developed into a form of resistance as well as emancipation. It testifies to resilience in the face of exploitation, dehumanization, and the loss of familiar ways of life, languages, and memories. From the perspective of Glissant and other actors from the Global South, a more relationally oriented worldview must go hand in hand with the decolonization of Western hegemony at all levels and prioritize justice. The desire for a world in which many different realities and worldviews have equal standing, originally formulated by Zapatista groups, has found its way into academia world with the concept of the pluriverse.

For *Making Kin*, this concept has become a guiding principle: the works of artists from different regions, diverse in their materiality and aesthetics yet informed by shared values, encounter each other in the exhibition space and challenge us – in Haraway's sense – to actively discover and recreate kinships.

Multidisciplinary Anishinaabe-French artist **Caroline Monnet** works in a research-based manner, focusing on Indigenous knowledge systems and their visual translations. *In Silence We Speak Volumes* consists of industrial building materials and addresses the often precarious living conditions of Indigenous communities. By incorporating abstract motifs and precise geometries into the wooden base, Monnet renews an Indigenous aesthetic that is both a repository of knowledge and a means of communication. Her practice is dedicated to the recovery of Indigenous art forms – but without strictly separating them from Euro-American traditions of abstraction. *Echoes from a Near Future* is a group portrait of three generations of women, including filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin. The work follows the concept of Indigenous Futurism, which draws on the past to envision alternative futures.

Berlin-based artist **Haegue Yang** is exhibiting works from her *Mesmerizing Mesh* series, which she began in 2021, as well as sculptural works from the

Intermediates and *Sonic Sculptures* series. This curated group reveals Yang's ongoing interest in primarily Korean traditions of shamanism, which were decried as anti-modern and massively suppressed under the military dictatorship in the 1960s and 1970s. The works connect Yang's ongoing exploration of the craft techniques and characteristic materials of shamanism – including metal bells, (artificial) straw, and *hanji* paper (a handmade material derived from the fibres of the mulberry tree), – as well as its ritual aspects, in particular, the cutting, folding, and perforating of *hanji*.

Catherine Blackburn is a multidisciplinary Dēnesuḡinē artist from Canada's Central Region. She uses craft practices as a decolonial tool to address issues of Indigenous sovereignty. In the works exhibited here, she honors her female relatives: through the practice of embroidery and beadwork, she sews connections to the power of her ancestors and to the caribou, which played an important role in the Dēnesuḡinē community. With an ironic gesture, Blackburn brings these "Indian affairs" (NDN Business) into the present as fashion accessories – a symbolic intertwining of loss, commercialization, and newly won sovereignty.

Aziza Kadyri combines textile techniques with augmented reality (AR). Born in Russia to Uzbek parents, raised in China, and educated in Beijing and London, she now lives in London. *9 Moons*

explores the multi-layered identities of Uzbek women and reflects on the fragility of family memory in the diaspora. Her starting point is her great-grandmother's dowry: a hand-embroidered *suzani* that was once cut up and distributed among the family. From the fragments, Kadyri reconstructs – both materially and historically – the stories of her female relatives, reflecting on how macro-histories manifest themselves as micro-politics. The "new moons," created in collaboration with embroiderer Yulduz Mukhiddinova and enhanced by an AR layer, convey knowledge about Central Asian textiles and embroidery techniques and emphasize their importance as forms of activism and storytelling – especially in times when women were politically excluded. At the same time, she questions the separation between art and "craft".

Using performative and theatrical approaches, **Meryl McMaster** explores questions of identity in her photo series and video works, reflecting the complexity of her own heritage, which is characterized by between Indigenous and European roots and her close relationship with the land. The two photographic works in the exhibition focus on the history and stories of the artist's female ancestors: inspired by her great-grandmother's diary, the artist sets out to trace the lives of her (great-)grandmothers. The memories these women passed on about their lives on the reservations, which had been

imposed on them by a colonist-settler society, are correspondingly fragmentary. In her photographic works, McMaster enters into a dialogue with her grandmothers and reactivates family stories that tell of resilience and survival.

Soe Yu Nwe's ceramic works range from small, delicate sculptures to more voluminous pieces. Her work has many references; she herself speaks of identity through design, explores the idea of displacement and transnational family histories, and examines the aesthetics of shrines and devotional objects. In the exhibition, she expands the circle of kinship to include a well and a tree from her grandmother's garden. She received the tree and well as gifts when she was born, connecting her to her place of her origin. As a third-generation Chinese immigrant in Myanmar, the artist's exploration of her origins is also linked to feelings of loss and alienation. In the fluid transitions between human and non-human actors, Soe Yu Nwe reveals the complexity of kinship relationships, drawing inspiration from different cultures.

Iguana by **Judith Raum** takes up motifs from the 1965 story of the same name by Anna Maria Ortese. In it, the author paints a picture of the entanglement between the exploitative treatment of "nature" on the one hand – embodied in the character of a wealthy Milanese count in search of new lands – and, on the other, his ambivalent desire for the

so-called "other", a female iguana named Estrellita. In *Iguana*, poetic motifs are interwoven with ethical and political questions, in which the human and the non-human intersect, oppression and gender, colonialism and slavery: In a state between hallucination and insight, the count understands Estrellita's "truth," that she is not an iguana, but a poor servant girl who has sunk into a quasi-animal state through misery, passion, and ignorance. In four delicate coloured pencil drawings, Judith Raum stages choreographed versions of several episodes from the novel. Twists and tortured gestures hint at the contradictory relationships and feelings of the characters. Judith Raum often explores philosophical questions in her artistic work, combining scientific and artistic research.

Zina Saro-Wiwa is a British-Nigerian artist and daughter of environmental activist and writer Ken Saro-Wiwa, who was murdered in 1995. Her homeland, Ogoniland, is a prime example of the intertwining of (post-)colonial violence and environmental destruction: the slave trade was followed by the exploitation of palm oil, and from the 1950s on, by oil extraction. *Karikpo Pipeline* refers to the antelope masks of the same name, in which ecological knowledge is stored and conveyed performatively. The masks not only dance on the decaying legacy of the oil industry, they also celebrate the resilience of Ogoni societies

and refer to their relational understanding of the world. The focus is not on untouched nature, but on nature as an inhabited place where livelihoods and health have been shaped by a long history of mutual ecological and social interaction.

Cara Romero's *Two Virgins* intertwines two murderous stories: On the one hand, the work refers to Annie Leibovitz's iconic photograph of Yoko Ono and John Lennon, taken a few hours before his assassination in 1980. On the other, the image refers to the almost complete extermination of the North American bison at the end of the 19th century by white settlers. This not only deprived the Indigenous prairie cultures of their livelihood but also meant a loss of social and cultural relationships and relational identities. The photo artist Cara Romero lives as a registered member of the Chemehuevi community in the southwestern United States.

Odun Orimolade is an artist, scholar, and lecturer at the Lagos Academy of Art. Her work focuses on memory and knowledge, and how these can be passed on across generations. Her paper works from the *Infinitum* series are an approach to her late father's Yoruba knowledge of plants. *Infinitum* stems from an attempt to grasp the impossible – to preserve the meanings and sounds of orally transmitted and partially lost words from her father's stories. In the tentative act of remembering and reinterpreting, beyond the secure

boundaries of language, a relational worldview manifests itself: How can the universal be understood from the polyphony of the world? How can the interplay of quantum entanglement be represented, how can a cosmology be designed in which spirit, science, energy, and matter are not opposites but interwoven forces?

Mae-ling Lokko is an architect and multidisciplinary artist. Her work explores issues of sustainability through the development of new materials. Despite its global relevance, this practice is deeply rooted in local experiences, botanical knowledge, and production circles. *Tears of the Coffin Maker* combines Ghanaian coffin art with a collaborative research project. This project deals, on the one hand, with the loss of cultural heritage and, on the other with material and craft practices that have been preserved and developed as a result of the transatlantic slave trade among the so-called returnee or Maroon communities. She correlates their transformative potential with her own material experiments, in this case, miniature coffins made from fungal mycelium, symbolizing the loss of cultural artefacts that now exist only as imprints or inclusions.

In her installations, **Katja Novitskova** hybridizes organic and technological aesthetics and examines how our images of "nature" are shaped by digital imagery and biotechnology modelling. In *Approximation (The Apocalypse's*

Many Horsemen), she layers various visual image planes between laboratory utensils and animal illustrations to create a tableau that tells us a story of loss: the black-and-yellow frog, native to Australia, has been nearly wiped out by an introduced fungus – despite the efforts of scientists in laboratories to breed a resistant species through gene editing. The monumental symmetry of the tableau serves as a monument to the endangered creature, while also representing the alienating effects of these visual worlds.

Ute Marxreiter and Kerstin Pinther



Catherine Blackburn x Emily Jan, *Ancestor Dreamin'*
2022, unsmoked caribou hide, vintage and antique micro glass seed beads, contemporary seed beads, gold-plated seed beads, caribou hair tufting, rhinestone chain, genuine pearls, dye sublimated printed satin backing, Swarovski bicones, faceted crystal pendants, hand dyed rooster feather fringe, gold-plated chain and findings, thermoplastic, epoxy resin, genuine leather, gold-leaf, Courtesy of Mackenzie Art Gallery (Regina, Saskatchewan)

Bound by the deep love that Indigenous adornment suggests, this selection of works for *Making Kin* brings together story, memory, and relationships to celebrate matriarchal love. Materials, techniques, and processes are threaded together that focus on Dene futurisms as a strategy for describing our bodies as time machines that can carry forward rich ancestral knowledges. Collaboratively, the works from **Convergence** harnesses the power of our grandmothers in all their ancestral knowledge. Just as our grandmothers created work imbued with intention and meaning using slow-fashion processes – processes defined as labours of love – we created work inspired by them, implementing memory as part of our living process. Memory, story, and kin relationships become major underpinnings as we recall some of our grandmother's favourite colours, materials, and techniques. These works are living vessels that honour the deep relationships of love to land, the land that has sustained the Dēnesųfinē people since time immemorial.

The works utilize natural materials such as caribou and moose skin, fur, hair, and bone. Through their incorporation we honour the land and the immense community-based labours of love by which they are harvested and prepared. Through stitchwork we explore how Indigenous adornment weaves our stories, teachings, and knowledges into our bodies. This collection creates agency through the power of dress.

Catherine Blackburn



Catherine Blackburn x Sophia Park, **Convergent Evolution**
 2022, harvested bear jaw, 18K gold teeth caps, gold plated embellishments / bead fringe,
 hand dyed rooster feather details, Swarovski accents, Courtesy of the artist



Catherine Blackburn, **NDN Business**
 2022, Photo print
 Courtesy of the artist, photo: Tira Howard

9 Moons explores the layered identities of women in Uzbekistan, beginning with an heirloom from my great-grandmother, Oybibi, whose name means “Moon Lady” in Uzbek. Her dowry – a large *suzani* embroidery from the Jizzakh Region depicting nine celestial bodies or “moons” – was cut into pieces and distributed among the members of my extended family. Two fragments kept by my immediate family form the core of this installation. The absent “moons” trace the lives of my grandmothers and great-grandmothers from the 1920s to today. The fragmented embroidery, stitched together with thread, creates a non-hierarchical family tree – or an “ancestral map”. These women’s untold struggles with colonialism, dogmatism, rigid ideology, and embedded patriarchy in Central Asia, particularly in Soviet Uzbekistan – reimagined through the dreamlike lens of my childhood memories – are further revealed in a hidden digital layer, accessible via the QR code.

Aziza Kadyri



Aziza Kadyri, **Nine Moons**
2023, textile and website with AR
Courtesy of the artist and eastcontemporary, Milan





As vessels for holding the human body and people's prized possessions, canoes and coffins share a lineage of sacred African and diasporic world-bridging practices that revolve around journeying across land and water, life and death. The sculptural installation ***Tears of the Coffin Maker*** reclaims the fragmented links between Africa and its diaspora through the material ecology of the ocean. Recalling Ghanaian coffin craft, the installation is composed of 58 linked coffins containing domestic artefacts from enslaved returnee and Maroon communities. Each coffin shows the imprints of 9 domestic possessions grown into a mycelium interior, while their protective exteriors are shaped from ongoing patterns of water dragging across the surface of sand over time.

Mae-ling Lokko

Mae-ling Lokko, ***Tears of the Coffin Maker***
 2025, rice husk, geopolymers binder from silicon and ferro-silicon metal alloy by-products,
 copper leaf, polylactic acid bioplastic, mycelium, epoxy
 Courtesy of the artist



Leave to Me Your Memories is from my series *nōhkominak ācimowina | Stories of My Grandmothers*. The series reassembles family stories from images, objects, and oral and written accounts of three of my *nēhiyaw/Métis* grandmothers, spanning 130 years. They all lived on Red Pheasant Cree Nation in Saskatchewan, Canada. I explore generational knowledge and the resilience of my grandmothers under colonial pressure. This image was inspired by stories of my great-grandmother and her children gathering grouse eggs to sell in town. At the time, the

government was culling grouse, echoing its systemic efforts to assimilate Indigenous peoples through residential schools – removing what was seen as a “nuisance” to prairie settlements.

Meryl McMaster

Meryl McMaster, **Leave to Me Your Memories**
2022, archival pigment on watercolour paper
Courtesy of the artist, Stephen Bulger Gallery and Pierre-François Ouellette art contemporain



Time’s Gravity is from my series *Wanderings*, where dreamlike experiences reflect the in-between state of past, present, and future – contemplating the self within the unknown. This photograph draws on my personal history, reflecting on pivotal life events from birth to my late twenties, as well as the weight of family, community, and national histories that help shape who we are. The photograph was taken in winter, a time when, in *nēhiyaw* culture, traditional stories are told because everything is asleep, and spirits won’t be disturbed. This is also when tribal

historians marked the most significant events of the year through drawings called “winter counts”. *Time’s Gravity* draws on this idea of history-telling; on the spines of these memories or journals are simple pictures inspired by that tradition, representing key moments and reflections that form part of my journey and identity.

Meryl McMaster

Meryl McMaster, **Time’s Gravity**
2015, archival pigment on watercolour paper
Courtesy of the artist, Stephen Bulger Gallery and Pierre-François Ouellette art contemporain



Caroline Monnet, *In Silence We Speak Volumes*
2023, oriented strand board, Courtesy of the artist

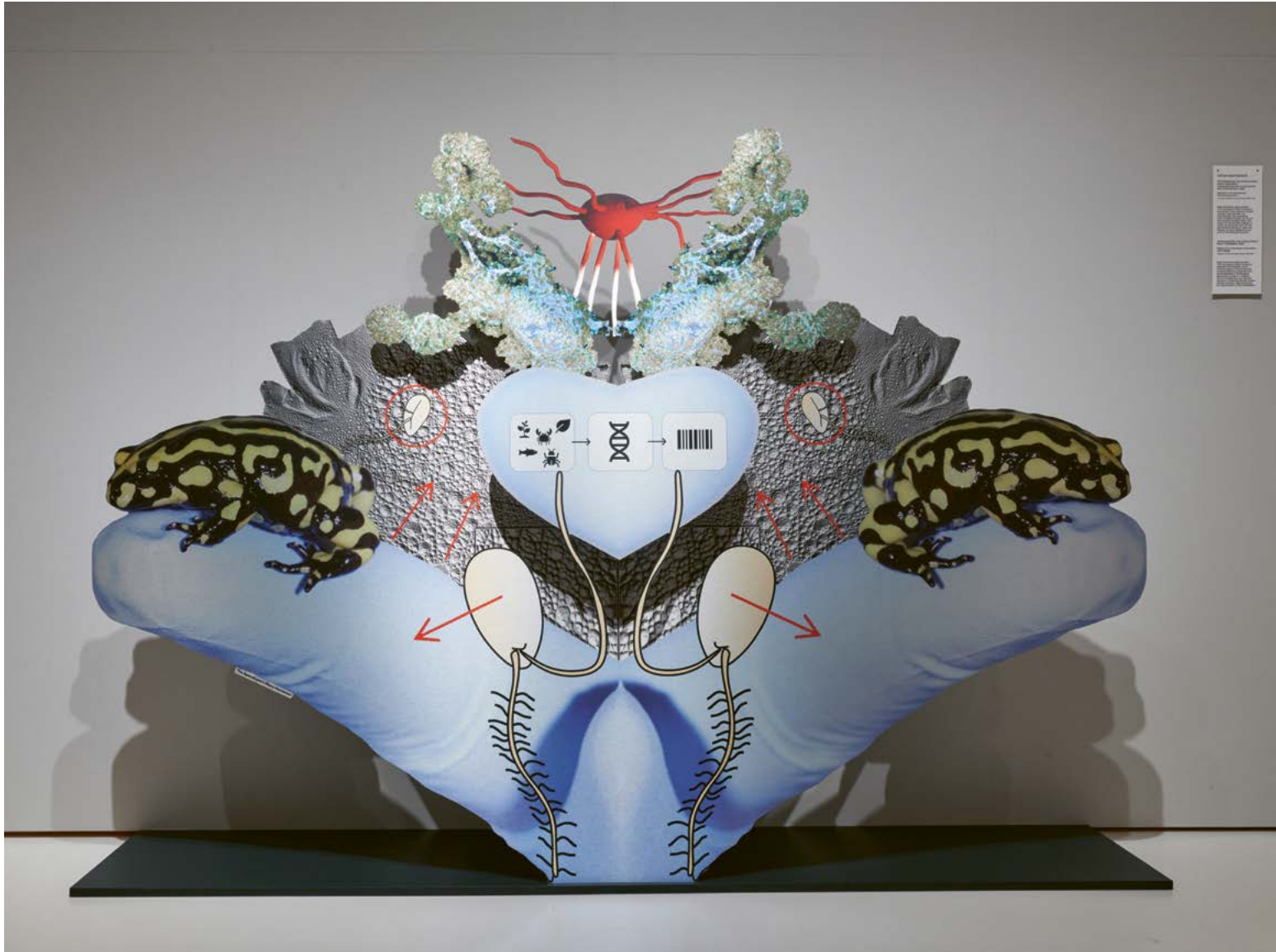
Many of Monnet's works like *In Silence We Speak Volumes* articulate a critique of the construction industry and its detrimental impact on the environment through the abuse of natural resources and displacement of Indigenous populations. Restoring connections between contractor-grade supplies and their original ecologies, she brings out the material qualities of engineered wood, imbuing them with new meaning through her use of intricate patterns derived from traditional Anishinaabe designs. Monnet reminds us that our economic wealth and our cities were built through the exploitation of trees. Economy and development are intimately linked to the natural environment and its resources. Trees are relatives; and our oldest relatives have most likely ended up in the oldest buildings of the cities we live in.

Studio Caroline Monnet



Caroline Monnet, *Echoes from a Near Future*
2022, photo print, Courtesy of the artist

Echoes from a Near Future is a group portrait that collapses time. The past, present, and future co-exist, informing each other, with no memory left behind but, equally, no future possibility left unrealized. The work's expansive temporality is underscored by the three generations of Indigenous women photographed. The unwavering sun, of dawn or dusk or both, stands for the ushering in of a new day, a new era. The work touches on the concept of Indigenous Futurism not by imagining an idealized past without colonization but by acknowledging and dissecting that very real history and debunking the notion that Indigenous culture is somehow a relic of the past or without its place in the future. The subjects of the portrait — one of whom is the filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin — are all critical female advocates for Indigenous life and contributors to the current cultural landscape. Their vestments — which may be vessels conveying self-image — are a fusion of traditional motifs and futuristic silhouettes, with all the dignity of regalia. The subjects' sharp and steady gazes remind us that the ability to envision the future is essential if we are to intentionally create it.



The sculpture is a “monument” to biodiversity and the ecological links between all living things, combining graphical elements from several scientific sources into a sculpture. A chytrid fungus, originating in Korea, has spread around the world and been responsible for a large loss of amphibian species in the last 50 years. The Australian yellow-black corroboree frog is sitting on a human hand in a lab glove. The species is close to extinction. The effort to stop this takes place mainly in labs: with attempts to gene-edit and select fungus-resistant frogs or other organisms that could help the frogs survive. Even if scientists are able to save one iconic species, a large number of less visually photogenic amphibians will be allowed to become extinct. The artwork registers a connection between the power of the image and the real-world consequences of it.

Katja Novitskova

Katja Novitskova, **Approximation (The Apocalypse's Many Horsemen)**
 2020, digital print on three layers of aluminium cutout display
 Courtesy of the artist and Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, Berlin

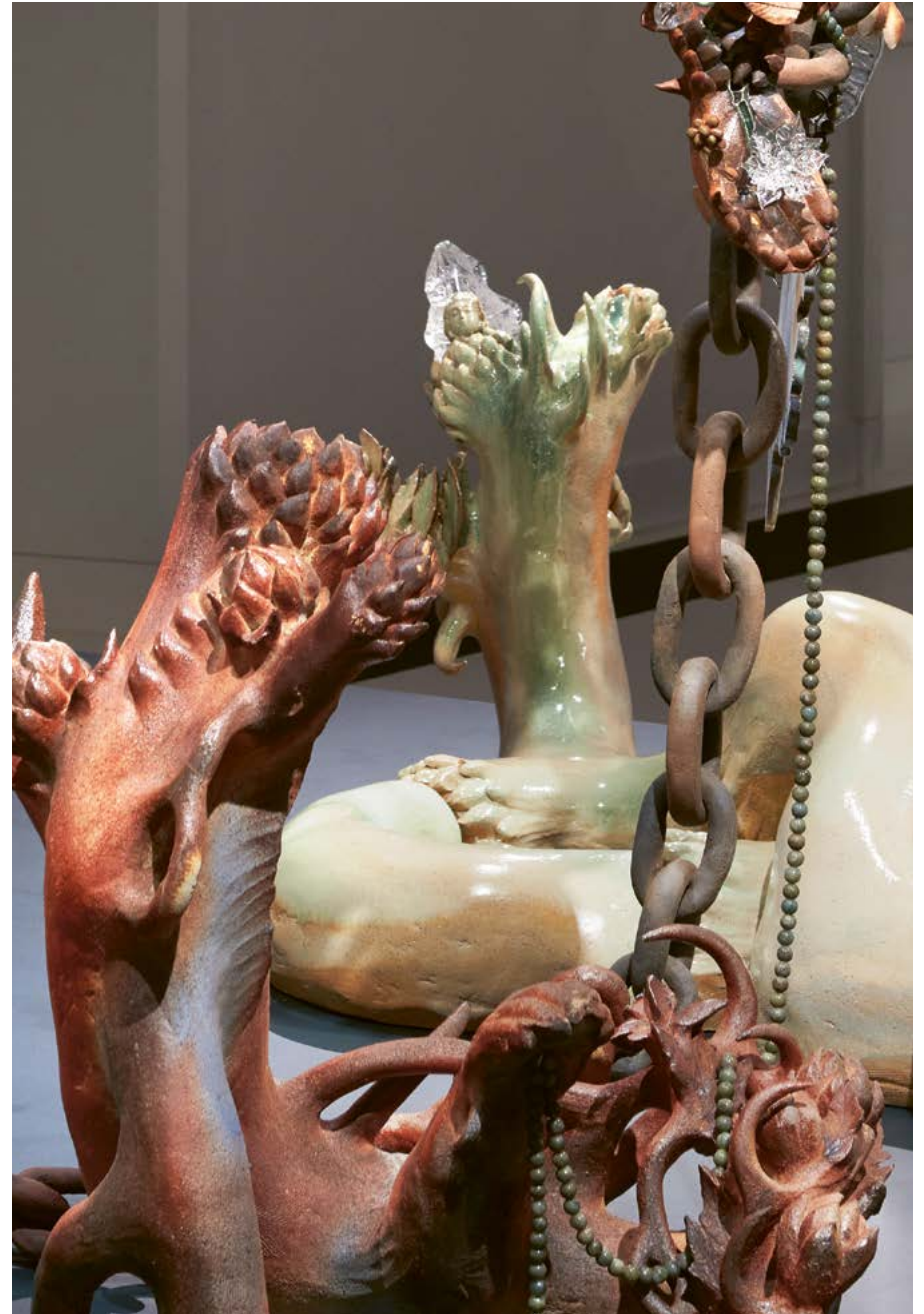


Soe Yu Nwe, **Name Story: The Three Godmothers, a well, a tree and a woman**
2025, glazed ceramics, underglaze and oxides, cast and sculpted glass, wire and glue
Courtesy of the artist

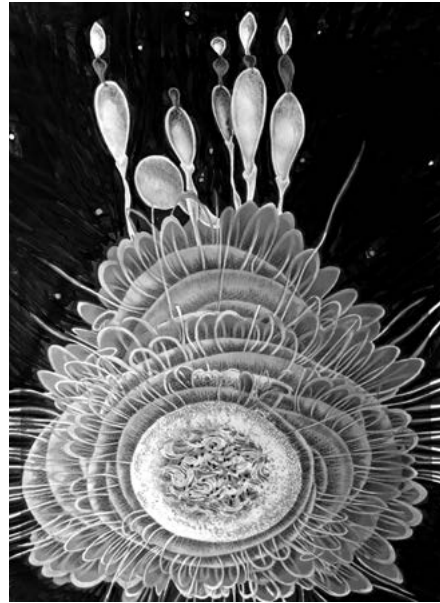
In this work, I explore animism, kinship connection, and motherhood within the culture I was raised in. I have always been perplexed by the idea of having non-human beings as godmothers as I have three godmothers – a woman who is a friend of my mother's, a well in my paternal grandparents' house in Lashio in Shan State, and a lychee tree in their garden. According to Yunnan traditional practice, a godmother is usually decided by the custom of *zhua mi* (scooping rice). The family take a rice container, or *pyi*, and fill it with one bowl of rice a day. The day the *pyi* is full, the woman who enters your house is the woman your child will connected with as their godmother. In the beginning I had a woman as my godmother. The godparent gives you a new name after the connection is formed. One time when we were visiting my father's hometown in Lashio – perhaps because I was anxious about the strange environment – I kept waking up from my dreams and walking around the room crying. The elders, including my aunt and my mother, thought that it was bad luck and maybe the result of evil spirits, since it is believed that children are more sensitive to these beings from another realm. They consulted my grandmother's friend who is familiar with our old customs. She advised my mother to form two more godparent relationships for me. My mother decided to connect me with the well and the lychee tree in my grandmother's

house. To solidify this relationship, they changed my name by asking my "well" godmother using the traditional moon blocks, which are a kind of Chinese divination tool used to seek guidance from the deity. The first name that the oracle agreed to was *Long* (dragon) *Hua* (flower), which has a connection to the "well" mother, since dragons are believed to be guardians of water (well). However, my aunt thought it was too masculine. Eventually, they settled on the name, *Shu* (tree) *Hua* (flower) in reference to the "tree" mother. To this day, my family calls me by the name Shu Hua.

Soe Yu Nwe



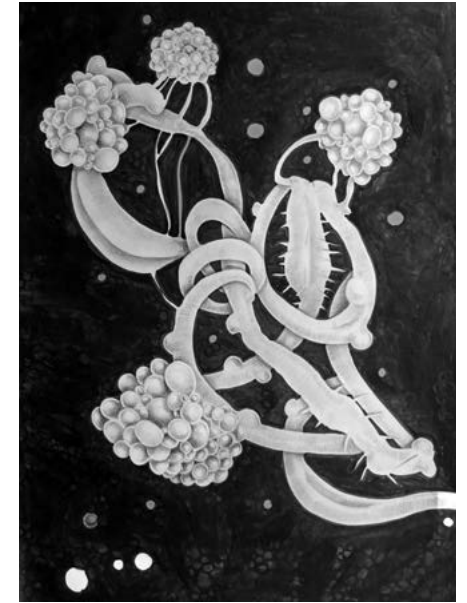
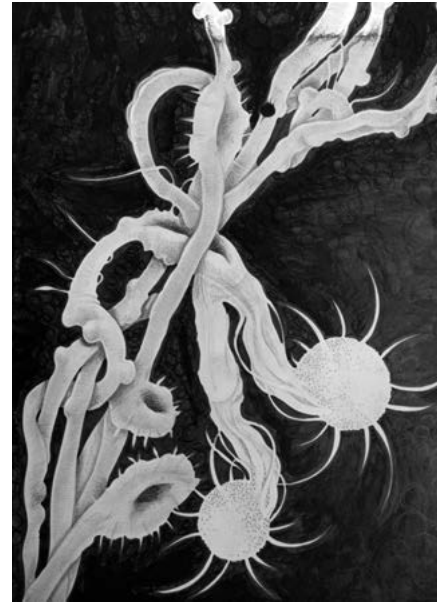
Detail: Soe Yu Nwe, *Name Story: The Three Godmothers, a well, a tree and a woman*



An allegory for the potential and possibilities contained in the unending expanse of space, where the intricate dance between science, fables, and phantasmagoria converges in cognition and its generative contexts. Matter and energy are a compass guiding the exploration of the generative. They are, however, subservient to mysterious forces that govern them. The complex play of quantum entanglements mirrors ancestral lineages, where spirit, science, energy, and matter are not opposites but interwoven forces, touching everything with a form of animism. The perpetually evolving qualities of the poetic dark space become a birthplace of mutations, morphing, emergences, and strategic modes where everything shifts

and changes. It is characteristically elusive, grasping the familiar and representing how knowledge, and transformation are often hidden from plain sight. It fosters a holistic lens through which to understand reality in overlapping territories, similar to the Yoruba world view and other philosophies. *Infinitum* embraces the unknown with curiosity, accepting the vulnerability required to explore.

Odun Orimolade



Odun Orimolade, *Infinitum*
2023, mixed media drawing on paper, Courtesy of the artist



Two Virgins replays Annie Leibovitz's 1980 portrait of John Lennon and Yoko Ono (1980), in which Lennon's nakedness encoded his vulnerability and love just prior to his death. The image depicts Buffalo Man experiencing intimacy, reminding us that he is not an infallible superhero but an imperfect spirit-being with complex human emotions, just like us. *Two Virgins* is a collaboration between Cara and mixed-media and performance artist Marcus Amerman, whose artistic alter ego is Buffalo Man. The image, featuring Nicole Nez and Buffalo Man, indigenizes this icon of pop culture.

Cara Romero

Judith Raum's four large-format drawings are based on the ironic novel *L'iguana* (The Iguana) by Italian author Anna Maria Ortese (1914–1998). Ortese's protagonist, Count Daddo, travels the seas at the behest of a society that drives him to pursue and accumulate investments. But everything he encounters arouses sentimental feelings in him. He has the greatest difficulty in buying islands to transform them into resorts. He much prefers to leave them be. On the uncharted island of Ocaña, Daddo makes an anguished discovery of the other: the deformed, the marginalized, the oppressed in all its contradictory and disturbing alterity – that of an animal that turns out to be different and yet similar to us, desired, betrayed, destroyed. Using coloured pencils, Raum stages choreographed versions of various episodes from the novel. Hybrid, mutable, and imbued with the unreal luminosity of Ocaña, the images are evanescent rather than made to last. Twisting forms, complicated intertwinings of limbs, and tortured gestures hint at the characters' ambiguous relationship to time, space, and inner tension.

After Gabi Scardi, 2016, on Judith Raum's cycle of drawings *Iguana*



Judith Raum, *Iguana #1-4*
2015, colored pencil on paper
Courtesy of the artist and Zilberman, Istanbul/Berlin

I was drawn early on in my practice to a very special masquerade, called *karikpo*. *Karikpo* masks can embody a plethora of animals, but they are usually associated with the antelope. They have big antelope horns and are mostly worn by young men, who perform somersaults in them. The masquerade is performed to celebrate planting season and to ensure fertility. It has a very joyful symbolism that speaks of our own relationships with the animals and the soil around us in Ogoni. It is about fecundity, about the vividness and relentlessness of life, about joyousness. It represents part of our own Indigenous environmentalism. ***Karikpo Pipeline*** juxtaposes two narratives of place: on the one hand, the spiritual, the rural, the agricultural; on the other, the industrial, the colonial, the exploitative. That's where the work came from, my readings of land and landscapes.

Another important motif in *Karikpo Pipeline* are the long roads and pathways that bifurcate the landscape. These long roads and lines are significant. My mother says that when she was a child in the 1950s, probably around the time Shell started prospecting for oil, adults would warn kids that they weren't allowed to go down certain roads because they were "possessed". The idea of spiritual possession was to keep away kids, who might not obey signs. In fact, these were roads that were literally possessed or "owned" by Shell Oil, which was building pipe-

lines along them. But I feel that the word "possessed" is so loaded, so interesting. It begs the question: What does it mean to possess or own the land? What is power? It calls into question issues of spatial and geographical ethics. Cultural power. The capturing of the imagination. The process of conquest. This idea of "possession" as something endlessly generative.

Karikpo Pipeline is one of the few pieces of mine where you'll see me refer to the oil industry textually or visually. Ogoniland is, in fact, one of the most magical places in the world if you engage with it in the right way. It's a fascinating and mystical place and this has nothing to do with oil (though oil in itself is neither good nor bad. Perhaps it has a spiritual inheritance of its own. Perhaps crude oil has another narrative that it has not been allowed?). I think my work is a kind of deeper surrender to the lessons of the earth.

Zina Saro-Wiwa



Zina Saro-Wiwa, ***Karikpo Pipeline***
2015/2021, 5-channel video installation 24:16 min.
Courtesy of the artist and the Mangrove Arts Foundation



Haegue Yang, *The Intermediate – Airflow of Pyramid Winnow* 2015, artificial straw, powder-coated steel frame, casters, plastic raffia string, artificial plants, Courtesy of Galerie Barbara Wien, Berlin

For *Making Kin*, Yang presents a group of works derived from her exploration of traditional paper and its ritualistic uses. Since 2021, this artistic pursuit has generated several groups of works, culminating in the cycle *Mesmerizing Mesh*. Two paper collages from this series are presented, complemented by four sculptural works. Together, these pieces reflect this long-standing artistic investment in the Korean folk arts.

Two *Mesmerizing Mesh* pieces, made with *hanji* – a traditional Korean mulberry paper – engage with the tradition of sacred paper cutting in which paper is folded and cut into symbolic forms used in diverse rituals.

Shadowland Full Bloom Formation – Mesmerizing Mesh #90 uses *hanji* to create kaleidoscopic, cosmological diagrams composed with a central symmetry and dynamic rotational patterns, evoking seasonal and ecological cycles. **Swaying Ray-Forest Soul Streamers – Mesmerizing Mesh #160** references Japanese Shinto rituals in which zigzag paper strips are attached to shrine entrances to ward off evil. Yang is drawn to this act of imbuing humble paper with sacred presence as a “mystic leap” taken by shamans and artists beyond the physical world into either spiritual or artistic dimensions.

Mesmerizing Lantern – Four Guardians in Crimson Mesh represents an early attempt at a sculptural production, taking as its

starting point the role of lanterns in shamanic rituals as vehicles for mourning and the blessing of a soul’s departure. Adorned with a chain of metal bells and paper flowers, the lantern features paper silhouettes of the four directional guardian deities of East Asian cosmology.

The sculpture **Mesmerizing Two-Leaf Folding Screen – April Showers Soul Glyph #5** (2022) draws inspiration from *munjado*, a Korean folk art where Chinese characters representing life mottos are paired with symbolic imagery. Originally created for the largely illiterate population in feudalistic society, *munjado* blurred the demarcation between text and image.

The *Intermediates* are created through labour-intensive and meticulous weaving techniques. Traditional agricultural societies often rely on leftover materials, such as straw, to produce everyday objects. Yang reimagines this practice by using artificial straw, introducing a layer of “quasi-authenticity” to her work. Woven with various synthetic materials, **Intermediate – Airflow of Pyramid Winnow** blurs cultural specificity to stress the universal practice of weaving with locally available essentials, such as palm leaves, wheat, rice, and cactus.

Sonic Celestial Rope – Iridescent Dodecagon Straight Weave draws inspiration from a Korean folk tale of two siblings who escape a tiger by climbing up to heaven to become the Sun and Moon.



Haegue Yang, *Mesmerizing Two-Leaf Folding Screen – April Showers Soul Glyph #5* 2022, Museum für Asiatische Kunst 2025-5; *Mesmerizing Lantern – Four Guardians in Crimson Mesh* 2022; *The Intermediate – Airflow of Pyramid Winnow* 2015; *Sonic Celestial Rope – Iridescent Dodecagon Straight Weave* 2021; Courtesy of Galerie Barbara Wien, Berlin

Imprint

Making Kin

28.11.2025 – 03.08.2026

The exhibition is part of the annual programme *Family Matters* at the Humboldt Forum, a joint production by Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss (SHF), the Ethnologisches Museum and Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz (SPK).

Direction and management of the annual programme Laura Goldenbaum

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Contemporary Art : Two Exhibitions _ Contemporary Art : Two Exhibitions _ Contem-

Two exhibitions featuring contemporary artistic positions expand the perspective on a transcultural and relational understanding of kinship within the framework of *Family Matters*. Feeding on their complementary relationship, *Nothing as Our Ground* and *Making Kin* bring together local and international artists who reflect on belonging beyond blood ties or standardized images of family promoted by the state. Their artistic practices revolve around acts of autonomy and symbiosis, the reactivation of marginalized knowledge, and the sensitive re-establishment of connections.

While *Nothing as Our Ground* foregrounds interpersonal relationships that arise from shared experiences of precarious living conditions and practices of everyday solidarity, *Making Kin* focuses in particular on relational ontologies, and (material) entanglements between humans, the land and other living beings. The concept of kinship is used by Indigenous peoples – and by various other actors – to describe, decolonize, and revive complex interrelationships and family constellations.

Together, the two exhibitions develop a poetics of relational diversity and imagine futures based on care and community. The plurality of kinship relationships exists in the context of transnational migration and hybrid and fluid identities that form connections between people, technologies, the land, and animal and spiritual entities. Many artistic works reflect experiences of vulnerability in relationships, violence, and transgenerational trauma as a result of (settler) colonial oppression. They also show the inseparability of the personal, the fleeting, and the intimate and the political dimension of relationship models – for example, when it comes to the rights and visibility of queer families constellations or the presence of female perspectives within larger historical narratives. With resilience, sensitivity, and humour, the artists show in their works how diverse and contradictory relationships that cross generations and borders and go beyond rigid, exclusionary family models are lived and recreated.

Hai Nam Nguyen, Minh Duc Pham, Ute Marxreiter, Kerstin Pinther

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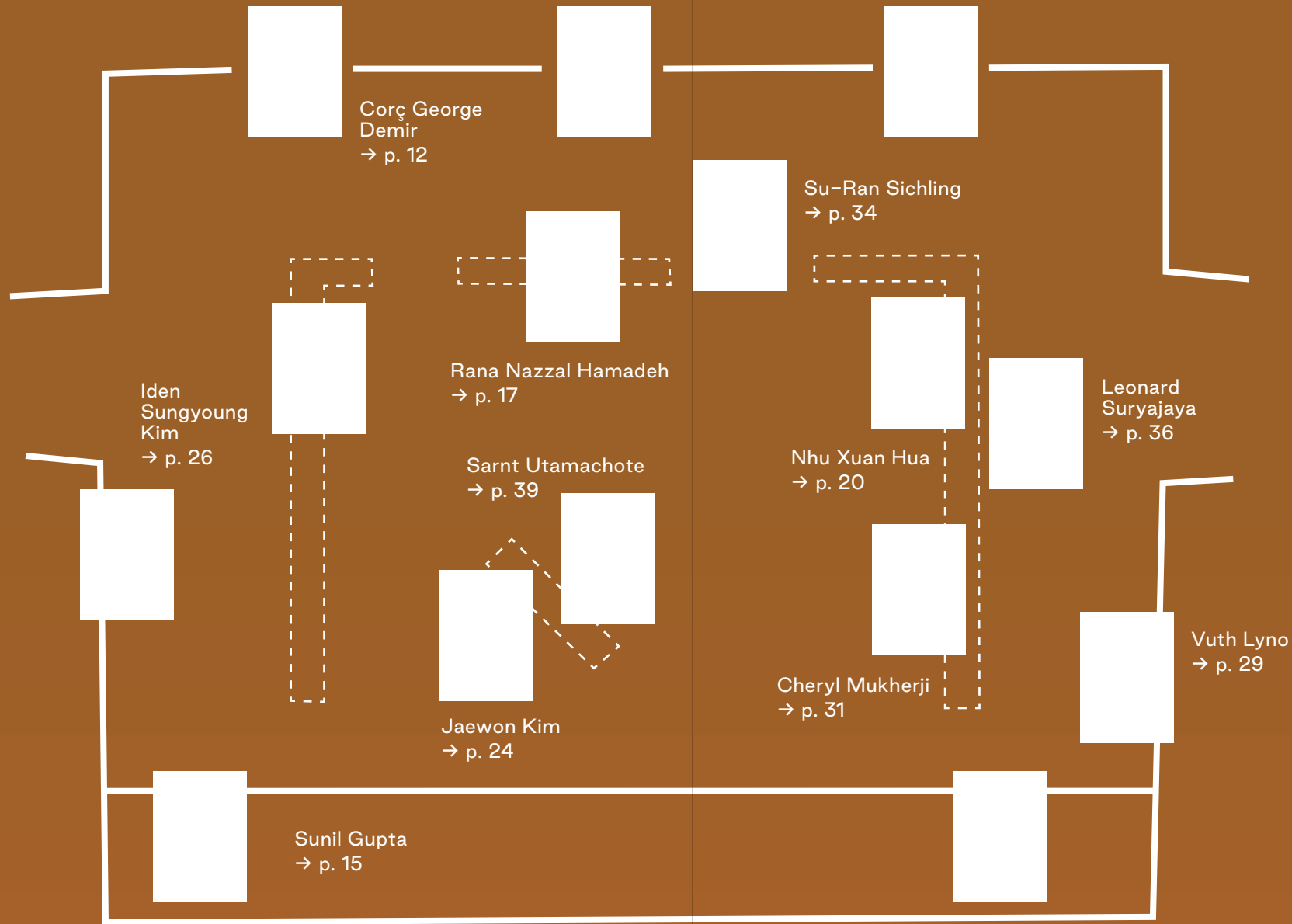
Hai Nam Nguyen, Minh Duc Pham, Ute Marxreiter, Kerstin Pinther

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Nothing as
Our Ground

Nothing as Our Ground

Room 312



Room 304

Making Kin

Relational Entanglements:

4

Contemporary Art in the Annual Programme *Family Matters*

What makes us the people we are? It is the contexts into which we are born or grow up: the family or other collective forms of kinship, in which nonhuman beings are also involved. The annual programme explores the status of these relationships and shows how fundamentally changeable and mutable, but also how essentially political, problematic and healing these connections are and always have been. Vice versa, they influence people, societies, cultures and environments. They answer the crucial question anew time and again: How do we want to live together?

In particular, the unique contribution of contemporary positions in three temporary exhibitions makes the in-between, the convergence and the co-existence tangible in all their nuances, thus forming a broad bracket between the here and now and the future. Through experimental research, painful analysis and visionary ideas, relationships are re-established – through birth, rebirth, transformation and dissolving boundaries.

Laura Goldenbaum
Programme Head, Annual Programme “Family Matters”

Welcome Address

5

The Ethnologisches Museum and the Museum für Asiatische Kunst of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin are intensifying their cooperation with the Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss as part of the cluster's cross-disciplinary annual theme, *Family Matters*. The two exhibitions, *Making Kin* and *Nothing as Our Ground* feature 24 international and local artistic positions that expand the topic of family in a transcultural way. The diversity, density, and presence of the artistic works in the exhibitions set a significant accent both in the cluster *Family Matters* and in the context of the collections' presentation, and strengthen the dialogue between the collections and contemporary art in an outstanding way. They thus continue the series of artistic interventions and exhibitions established since 2023, such as *Kimsooja – (Un)Folding Bottari (2023)*, *Beyond Borders. Artistic Internationalism in the GDR (2024)* and *Takehito Koganezawa. One on Two, Two from One (2025)*.

Both exhibitions create yet another link by establishing the principle of collaboration, which has been the focus of CoMuse, the collaborative museum, since 2023: They were equally developed by curatorial teams – one by guest curators Minh Duc Pham and Hai Nam Nguyen and the other by Kerstin Pinther and Ute Marxreiter from the museums, who transform curatorial (individual) authority into a collaborative and multi-perspective way of working. The

wide range of artistic works, including large-scale installations, video works, photographic art, drawings, and sculptural works, invites museum visitors to reflect and discuss the important topics of relationships and family in a sensory way.

Alexis von Poser
Deputy Director Ethnologisches Museum and Museum für Asiatische Kunst



Video: Rana Nazzal Hamadeh, *Something from there* 2020, video, 7 min, Courtesy of the artist
 Display case: Rana Nazzal Hamadeh, *1/1000th of a Dunam* 2019– (ongoing), soil, plastic bags, Courtesy of the artist

For many, it might be the textbook image of three figures: the father, the mother, the child, seen sitting together — around a festive table filled with food that the mother has spent all day preparing — laughing joyfully, perhaps holding hands in prayer. However, in reality, this image speaks more of a longing than of what is. The ideal of the nuclear family has been so strongly institutionalized and internalized that, for most of us, it is merely a projection, something we measure ourselves against rather than something we inhabit. The politicization of the heteronormative family has long been used as a means of social control. During and after the Industrial Revolution, the model of the nuclear family was promoted as a means to adapt to urbanization and stabilize the workforce and housing policies.

The title *Nothing as Our Ground* identifies a shift from territory to relation. “Ground” here is not a parcel of land but a shared point of departure. It is a way of holding one another when fixed anchors are absent. What seems like “nothing” is not a void; it is the open space from which kinship can be made, remembered, and tended — together, in motion, and across distance.

Historically, the nuclear family also worked as a disciplinary unit. Domesticity was moralized, labour was divided along gender lines, and housing regimes compelled reproduction to fall into step

with industrial growth and nation-building. In this setting, family served as a policy instrument, stabilizing wages, labour, and property while determining who qualified as a household in the first place. At the same time, it came to be imagined as a place of refuge within a heteronormative order. Its definition has been shaped by gender norms, sexuality, and cultural and religious frameworks. Yet the family image—father, mother, child, bound by blood or legal ties—tells only part of the story. For many people, especially queer individuals, those with migration experiences, or people with disabilities, this fixed model does not reflect their lived realities. The problem is structural. Even when the nuclear family appears to work, the model tends to treat care as natural and private. Outside that frame, the same pressures persist and frequently turn into a daily process of negotiating recognition and access. Care is not a task confined to the home. It is an interdependent ecology, where support moves physically, mentally across bodies, time, and distance. It is learned, distributed, and sustained collectively, even where law and infrastructure lag behind. In that light, kinship reads as practice rather than proclamation.

This gap between lived practice and official recognition is not only cultural but legal. Chosen kin are frequently unrecognized in cases of adoption, caregiving consent, inheritance, residency, or

health insurance. Belonging is practised long before it is legally validated and often in spite of what the law can register. The exhibition attends to this everyday legality of care, where commitment is real even when it is undocumented.

Nothing as Our Ground was born out of a need to reflect on a world defined by social and political instability, climate crises, and wars that continue to have a profound impact on global migration and patterns of displacement. These overlapping conditions expose the contradictions and double standards embedded within the core values of Western neo-colonialism and imperialism. Such configurations do not operate from a single centre. They entangle local elites, media ecologies, and regional histories. The exhibition maps how imperial grammars travel and how they are resisted, translated, or rejected in specific places. At the level of everyday economies, care is unevenly distributed: paid and unpaid, formal and informal, often transnational and precarious. These conditions define who is free to belong and who must negotiate kinship through contracts, remittances and visas. The artworks trace these frictions as textures of daily life.

Drawing from queer perspectives and lived experiences, the exhibition brings together eleven Asian and Asian diasporic artists whose practices trace different forms of kinship, care, and belonging. We use "Asian and Asian

diasporic" as an open frame for diverse origins and experiences. The works emerge from different languages, generations, migration routes, and intersecting class positions and faith traditions. What links them is a concern with how bonds are formed under pressure.

Each work questions the notion of the institutionalized family, looking closer at moments of fragility, those points where the traditional family structure fails to offer the fulfillment it promises. Methodologies of care are the pillars of the exhibition: images are made collaboratively and authorship is shared with those who take part. Attention itself is treated as a resource. Consent, pacing, and access are understood as formal qualities of the work rather than additions in the margin. Through this queer perspective, alternative forms of family unfold, reshaping themselves around individual needs and the pursuit of shared joy. *Nothing as Our Ground* resists the loud, colourful imagery of Western queer liberation and turns instead toward the tender, quiet, and intimate textures of queer life.

The exhibition unfolds its motifs directly in the architecture, allowing them to take shape through a quiet, almost unobtrusive intervention. The corridor, open to soft daylight and to the movement of bodies passing by, becomes a place where visibility and representation are held in a state of tension. **Leonard Suryajaya** responds to this

openness with staged kinship that refuses to contract. His collages carry the weight of a diasporic biography shaped by assimilation, silence, and the ruptures of citizenship, in which the act of gaining legal belonging becomes entangled with inherited histories of exile. Positioning himself against established heraldic hierarchies, **Corç George Demir** repositions symbols of lineage using queer, working-class, and migrant experiences, questioning who is authorized to define kinship within institutional narratives. In the space where intimacy brushes against legal structures in Delhi, **Sunil Gupta** identifies a tension that exposes the projected liberation of the West as both promise and limit. Created during a period marked by the criminalization of same-sex intimacy and the absence of public exhibition spaces in India, the work registers the pressures of visibility as forms of internal exile. It stands as a reminder that this promise has slipped further from reach with the rise of far-right movements. **Vuth Lyno** places several family portraits in conversation with staged memories allowing roles, proximity, and permission to be negotiated in plain view. Here, the portrayed individuals determine their own positions within the frame, letting representation emerge as a shared negotiation. **Iden Sungyoung Kim** likewise situates presence within the micropolitics of everyday gestures, foregrounding women not as passive caregivers but as active

agents who navigate and shape structures of care. Together these positions activate the corridor as a site of continual movement, where self-chosen representation is met, shaped, and sometimes unsettled by the external assignments embedded in public visibility.

At the threshold between the corridor and the inner room, **Su-Ran Sichling** introduces the question of when private images shift into public relations. A metal drawing derived from an East German schoolbook illustration functions as a transparent barrier, visible yet impermeable, revealing how roles emerge not only from what is seen but also from the spatial and relational conditions that determine the way we experience the world. This threshold links the corridor's exposure to the shelter of the inner room, turning illustration into relation and marking the point where form, position, and perception converge.

Crossing inward, the atmosphere changes, and a different rhythm takes hold. The shift in tempo prompts questions about how care is sustained across time, distance, and diaspora, and about how belonging is shaped when support is stretched or disrupted. The inner space gathers these altered registers into a shared field of intimacy. By placing a portrait made by their mother alongside footage in which the mother appears through the artist's own CCTV recordings, **Cheryl Mukherji** makes the act of gazing perceptible as a reciprocal

impulse. By contrast, **Nhu Xuan Hua** engages family archives by blurring faces, drawing attention to the mechanisms through which memory is shaped, and relations are negotiated or withheld within domestic contexts. The blurring becomes a reminder of how families determine legibility internally, of how ties are measured, protected, or kept in check through photographic practice. The interplay between care and representation continues in **Sarnt Utamachote's** interweaving of lullabies with scenes of caregiving and the white gaze, articulating a refusal to be appropriated or simplified. Within this environment, **Iden Sungyoung Kim** appears as part of a sisterly constellation, taking up the task of making disability visible within an oppressive political frame. Her position underscores how care binds and strains relationships, preparing the ground for questions of vulnerability that reappear elsewhere in the room. **Jaewon Kim** keeps trust present within a relationship marked by HIV and has tenderness hold firm against the noise of stigma. Referencing the medical reality of undetectability, the work reframes the perceived distance between partners as a site where intimacy is negotiated rather than feared. **Rana Nazzal Hamadeh** threads voice, landscape, and soil into a practice of belonging that arises through exile and continues in spite of it. Her works articulate how land, memory, and kinship are mediated by political force, chal-

lenging the institutional distinction between sanctioned narratives and the lived practices through which belonging persists.

Across these positions, family appears less as a fixed structure than as a field of negotiation shaped by displacement, desire, care, and the conditions that govern who may be seen and who may speak. In this light, queerness can be understood as a practice of relating otherwise. It brings together ways of forming and reforming bonds across distance, of questioning given roles and of sustaining forms of care that reach beyond the limits set by law, property and the nuclear household. Queerness becomes visible in gestures of attention, protection, and solidarity that continue even when familiar anchors fall away. *Nothing as Our Ground* points to this unsettled terrain, where kinship is not guaranteed in advance but takes shape through ongoing acts of holding, adjusting, and remaining connected in the midst of uncertainty.

*Hai Nam Nguyen (HNN),
Minh Duc Pham (MDP)*



One's Coats of Armours creates a heraldry of its own. The three textile coats of arms make working-class perspectives and experiences of queerness and migration visible, transforming the conventional iconography of heraldry into a tool for self-reflection. The logic of social status and privileges by birth are replaced by origin, chosen family, and labour. Ornament becomes memory; decoration turns into testimony, giving rise to an archive of belonging mediated by symbols.

Coat of F embodies the family crest of a working-class family. It bears traces of everyday tools, surfaces, and fabrics. Local references, personal and political family histories come together to form a structure that represents solidarity. Within the vocabulary of heraldry, animals become emblems. Here, the horse refers to mobility, labour, and overcoming distances, referring to the history of guest workers. The German Shepherd embeds the scene in a German context, where belonging is negotiated between protection and control.

Coat of Q is a queer coat of arms that reimagines ancestry. Icons, common references and personal configurations create a pattern in which friendships, memories and community intertwine. Queerness appears as a consciously chosen kinship that does not follow rigid lines but rather forms a network. Belonging is sought, tested and practised in solidarity. Language also adopts

the visual logic of heraldry. Slurs are reappropriated and repurposed as Geuzen words. Harm can be turned into a symbol of strength and resilience.

Coat of L accumulates traces of 16 years of labour behind the bar. Glasses, lights, gestures, and small rituals of work shifts become an iconography in their own right – a working crest that honours work itself rather than status. It pays tribute to losing oneself in routines, moving gracefully between people, conversations, and drinks. Labour appears as an expression of existence, a record of a lived body.

Combined, they form an alternative narrative. Demir utilizes the imagery of heraldry to expand the concept of family, heritage, and identity. *One's Coats of Armours* shifts the traditional vocabulary towards symbols of labour, kinship, and queer relationships, asking how belonging emerges from the synergies of memory, symbols, and lived experience. Instead of leaving heraldry as a badge of authority, the series opens up its means to a medium in which lifelines can be mapped and in which a community is formed from experiences that are often overlooked.

Corç George Demir, HNN, MDP

The year 1997, the 50th anniversary of Indian independence, saw the continued suppression of gay men. While nationalists, communists, and World Bank technocrats drafted social reforms to redistribute wealth, they maintained a shared silence around homosexuality.

Many gay men felt unable to return to India. Most lived on the margins and faced pressure to keep up a “normal” front. A few in privileged positions could avoid that pressure. Only a very small number, those marked by the “dirty habit”, including men who called themselves gay, emerged from a self-imposed internal exile. Constitutional gains in the West were noticed but could not simply be transplanted to India. HIV/AIDS, meanwhile, intensified stereotypes, especially the claim that homosexuality was “Western”, a notion belied by even minimal contact with the local scene.

Given the country's complexity (community, caste, class, and the rural-urban divide), a cohesive identity was lacking. Individuals and small groups sought to build community. The impulse for this often came via feminist movements, as many men lacked a language for change, particularly where it risked being thrown out of the family home.

The work presented here is a snapshot of that situation. Set in Delhi, it focuses on sites where gay men meet. Participants agreed

that while clear political demands were hard to formulate, a discussion could begin in the cultural field.

At the time, male homosexual acts were illegal, a colonial hangover. The work was first shown in London, as no venue in India would present it. The legal landscape has shifted since 2018, when India's Supreme Court decriminalized consensual same-sex relations, overturning the colonial statute.

Sunil Gupta



India Gate
Even if you have a lover you should get married
and have children. Who would look after you in
old age?



Haaz Khas.

It must be marvellous for you in the West
with your bars, clubs, gay liberation
and all that.

previous page: Sunil Gupta, *Exiles – India Gate*, 1987
Sunil Gupta, *Exiles – Haaz Khas*, 1986
Photographs, digital print on textiles
Courtesy of the artist and gallery Matèria, Rome

Rana Nazzal Hamadeh brings together voices, landscapes, and memories to mould fragments into a shared vision of belonging. In *Something from there*, she connects conversations, recollections, local footage, and materials. What emerges is an open narrative that oscillates between exile and home and is carried by the voices of Hamadeh's parents. Her father speaks of his deportation in 1948 and how he has not returned since. Her mother refers to her hometown and inserts the location into the narration. Although her story is not fully recounted, it has a powerful resonance.

The "Something from there" remains purposely unnamed, yet it is always present. It might be soil, a piece of land, traces of ancestors. The film reveals the interconnection between body and soil. It examines how memory endures when territory is denied and shows how symbols can preserve a homeland denied elsewhere. Earth, dust, stone, and sound bear traces of origin. They root connectedness in shared knowledge and the practice of remembering.

1/1000th of a Dunam extends this work through material means. The artist collects soil from various regions of Palestine and displays it as an archive. Each sample is a small fragment, subtle yet tangible. Together, they bear witness to Palestine as a lived, collective reality. In the display case, they form a silent topography of resistance.

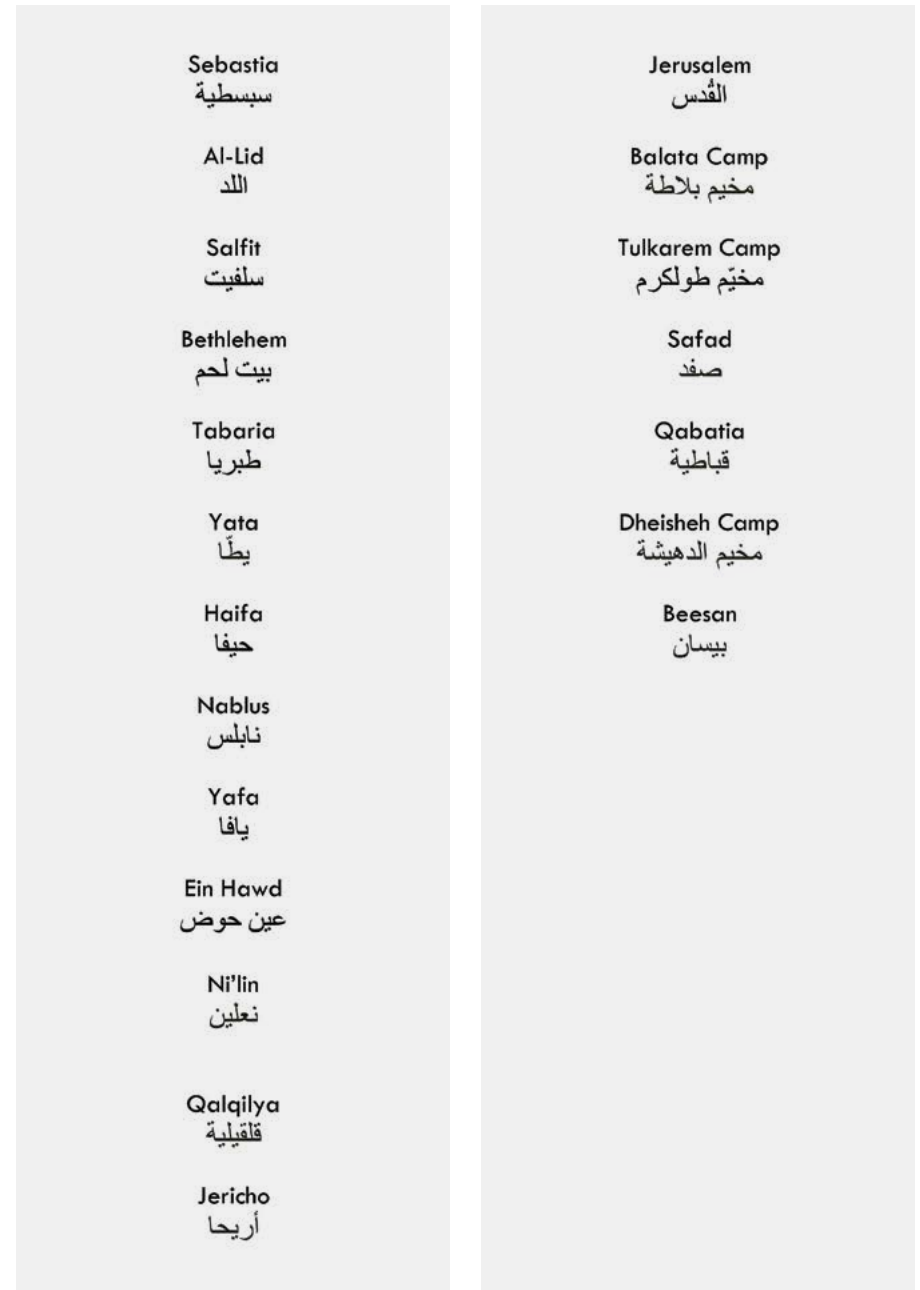
Both works address how memory takes shape when places are inaccessible or when their names remain the subject of dispute. They highlight that belonging is not only established through documents but rather through practices of caring and sharing. Collecting, labelling, and arranging become a method. Voices carry knowledge; soil recalls paths, houses, and people without exposing them.

The queerness of Hamadeh's work is evident in its absence of fixed points of reference. Places remain precarious, names are challenged, visible markers of property fade away. Nevertheless, the works continue to insist on connectedness. Family is defined by soil, sound, and memory. Earth appears as a medium for stories and relationships. This creates a form of kinship beyond heteronormativity, in which bonds that arise from storytelling and persist in resistance to erasure are chosen and shared. The work is a clear commentary on institutional power structures: Who has authority to define family? Who claims power to determine belonging?

HNN, MDP



Rana Nazzal Hamadeh, *Something from there*
2020, video, 7 min, Courtesy of the artist



Rana Nazzal Hamadeh, *1/1000th of a Dunam*
2019 – , soil, plastic bags, Courtesy of the artist

They enter the room and read :
 Dear fingers with crayon lines,
 Have you ever experienced a strange body reaction
 initiated by scattered emotions ?
 I tried to capture nothing else than a feeling.
 The knots in my inner voice
 Singing loud in colour blue from inherited pieces shuffled.
 Can you hear the vessel roaring?
 The sounds of plates and cutlery
 Knocking on the table
 Calling for dinner.
 Would you sit down with me?
 Share the meal of anamnesis crack the egg revealing the sleeping forms of the Annamese
 It's an invitation for a treasure hunt on paper
 Images mapping a route connecting past and present
 The contour of a familiar crowd
 is stating a country
 Merging places and people.
 He, She, They, Here and There become one
 after having been set apart for so long.
 They have been sent to wait until it comes.
 Passports for new exchanges
 They walk around, meet, dance, multiply, dissipate
 leaving behind them
 the mere and haunting presence of nostalgia
 just in time for Gladiola season.
 To remember is to accept that something has been forgotten
 That something has been lost.
 And something that was once owned
 Needs to be found again.
 Re-remembered.
 We then go on a hunt
 sometimes with clues, sometimes with nothing
 Bare hands
 bare feet.
 Unprepared,
 scared,
 excited.
 Cracking the skull of the real enemies
 Omission and Forgetfulness.
 Shield the distance that has been bruised.
 Recalibrate the trajectories so we won't miss the path buried by the dust.
 Hey wind, don't mistake the movements for tone of a ghost.

The resemblance will trick you.
 What you must see is the unforgettable commons
 Streaming in circles.
 Be all ears for what you now comprehend clearer
 as for the black and white dog who barks
 and signals that something transformed will be coming.

Nhu Xuan Hua



Nhu Xuan Hua, *Tropism, Consequences of a Displaced Memory*, 2016 – 2022



Nhu Xuan Hua, *Tropism, Consequences of a Displaced Memory*, 2016 – 2022.
 Pigment inkjet print, face-mounted under Plexiglas, flush aluminum frame on Dibond, (1/6+2)
 Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Anne-Laure Buffard

What did we find in the darkness where the black light disappeared... Even if nothing is in the dark, that doesn't mean nothing can be seen. Intimate breath is maintained in blurry sight, the breath is given into, other moments would be found and illuminated. *Jaewon Kim*

Nuance tells the story of a romantic relationship between an HIV-positive and an HIV-negative person. The starting point is U=U, i.e. the medical fact that an undetectable level of the virus is not contagious. This opens up a space for exploring trust, intimacy, and care. The work consists of 42 photographs that overlap like memories. Images surface, disappear again, cover each other, and evoke new meanings. Voice and music provide an inner pacing and connect the visible with the spoken.

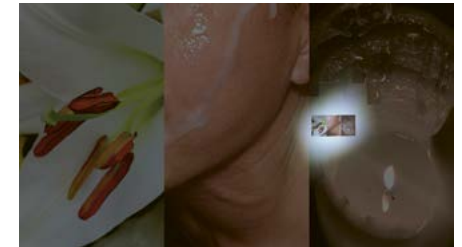
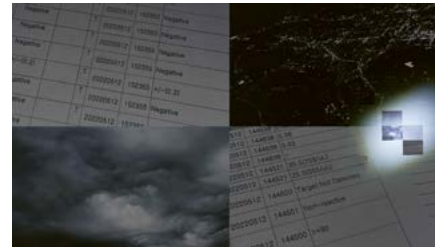
Kim refers to a "gap" between two individuals. At first, this gap appears to be a threat. It can be experienced as distance, insecurity, or stigma. However, as the video progresses, the gap becomes a place of intimacy. It gives a sense of proportion, respect for boundaries, and trust. Warmth, breath, skin and light form a poetic expression of intimacy without pathos. The image sequences alternate between close-up and wide shot. At times, the gaze remains on a surface, then expands into the open. This creates a pattern of encounter and withdrawal.

Nuance shifts its focus from risk to connection. It shows how

love can be experienced beyond health-related norms. Reliable medical treatment protects the body and changes our notion of safety. Biases remain noticeable, although they do not define the narrative. Ultimately, what matters is what two people agree upon. The work demonstrates that intimacy evolves through small gestures and shows how care is an everyday matter.

As such, *Nuance* represents a gentle testimony. A shared presence emerges between image and voice, in which intimacy becomes evident as a collaborative effort. Out of these moments arises a calm declaration not limited to clear statements. All that remains is a glance shared between two individuals.

Jaewon Kim, HNN, MDP



Jaewon Kim, **Nuance**

2022, video, 6:13 min

Commissioned work for Visual AIDS for Day With(out) Art, Courtesy of the artist



Iden Sungyoung Kim, *The next day after you died*
2022, silver gelatine print on baryta paper, Courtesy of the artist

Iden Sungyoung Kim incorporates analogue photography, text, and projection into a work that renders care where it often remains hidden. She considers her photographic language to be a form of drawing. Working in analogue, consistently and physically, Kim develops her own narrative in order to prevent oblivion. The negatives and prints are intended as a permanent archive. They outlive individual biographies and preserve traces that tend to be lost in cultural memory. Each image acts as a kind of footnote, hinting at hidden stories about people, society, and politics.

The next day after you died draws on Kim's close relationship with her sister, who lives with a severe disability. Kim portrays her everyday life, revealing a relationship built on care and time. The images show intimate moments and small gestures. The body of work is an expression of a sisterly bond and, simultaneously, a protest against a society that marginalises people with disabilities. In South Korea, normality is strongly linked to productivity. Kim's work contradicts this logic by devoting herself to awareness and continuity. Closeness does not arise from quick access but from repeated, patient attentiveness.

Your care never left our home carries this work further into the space. Photographs show motions of care. Hands are cutting, holding, washing, folding. The gestures appear as fragmented and

slowed down, as if they appear to be recalled gradually. A slide projector displays the names of women of the parents' generation on the wall. They step out of the anonymous maternal role and are recognised as individuals. In this way, domestic labour is both documented and acknowledged. The installation demonstrates that care cannot be dismissed simply because it is unpaid. It remains in the home, in the body, in the images.

Both works link personal experiences with social reality. They show that care can be carried across time and space. The analogue method connects the past with the present and opens up a third space of memory. Private moments become public knowledge. Tender gestures become a clear stance.

Iden Sungyoung Kim, HNN, MDP



Thoamada II portrays queer individuals in Cambodia and their families. The series is conceived as a diptych: each pair consists of a family portrait and a second image that freely re-enacts a significant memory. Together, they offer two perspectives on belonging: one shows how a family wishes to present itself publicly, while the other opens a space where personal history and emotion come into view.

The project begins with a series of conversations with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans people and their relatives. For the group portrait, the families decide for themselves on the composition and positioning. This provides insight into roles, proximity and distance, and desires for visibility. The memory image is developed collaboratively with the artist. It captures meaningful for those involved – a gesture, a place, an everyday object. Between the two photographs there emerges a fragile network shaped by intimacy and expectation, respect and negotiation. Within this lived practice, the protagonists appear between personal longing and social boundaries.

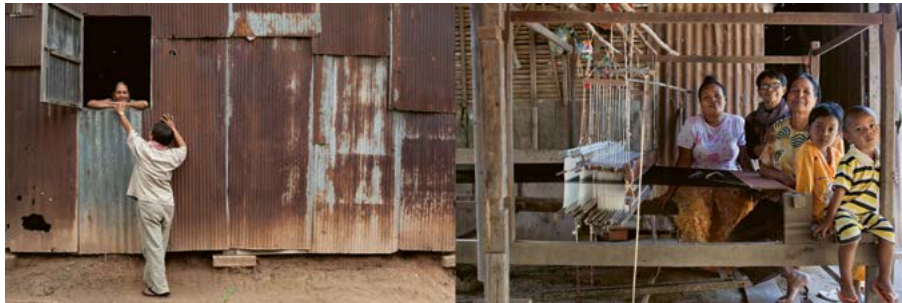
Thoamada II builds on the earlier project *Thoamada* from 2011, which focused on gay and bisexual men. The new work broadens the focus to LGBTIQ+ family constellations. Its photographic method is dialogical: it invites participants to shape their own visual language and makes visible how identity and belonging take form within a specific context.

The accompanying photobook gathers excerpts from the interviews as well as texts by two queer artists and writers who reflect on how non-heteronormative families in Cambodia negotiate questions of visibility and identity.

Artist's note

The photographs and texts were created in 2013. Since then, much has changed. The families portrayed have experienced loss and transformation. Sanh's wife from *The Door Knocker* and Sitha's wife from *The Salt Seeker* have passed away. Dareth and Chamroeun from *The Makeup Artist* have separated but remain close friends. Public awareness and debates about the Cambodian LGBTIQ+ community have increased. Visibility and activism have grown stronger, especially on stage and in social media. Same-sex couples increasingly marry according to traditional customs, even though civil marriage is not yet legally recognized. Current demands concern the legal recognition of gender identity in personal documents, adoption rights for same-sex couples, and the opening of marriage to all.

Vuth Lyno, HNN, MDP



Vuth Lyo, *Thoamada II*
 from top to bottom: *The Babysitter*, 2013, *The Door Knocker*, 2012, *The Make-up Artist*, 2013
 2012–2013, adapted photography publication, 4 diptychs mounted on Dibond, 4 texts printed
 on bristol board, Courtesy des Künstlers



Cheryl Mukherji, *Self Portrait with Maa*
 2024, inkjet print, Courtesy Cheryl Mukherji

Transcription

Promise Me, 2020

7:37 min

(phone ringing)

Shoma

I'm listening

Shoma?

I'm listening, what happened?

I don't want to do anything. I don't want to prove anything to anybody anymore Shoma.

(sobbing)

Just be with a person...who...remember that, don't be a fool like me to fall in love. Understand?

Don't be a fool like me and spoil your life, to *jhelo* everything of that person and then at the end of 25 years...

(Sobbing)

Be happy *beta*, I am not going to be with you for a long time. Choose your partner right so that you can live happily. Don't be an emotional fool like me. Promise me you will not be like me. Shoma?

I'm listening Mumma.

Shoma?

Haan mumma, I'm listening.I love you very much, *bacha*.

I love all my three children very much.

(sobbing)

I love all of them. I don't compare anybody. For me every one of them is very special. Every one of them is very special. Aah I am feeling very tired now.

Haan?

(muffled voice in the distance)

*Haan, aa rahi hoon.**Aami jaacchi eyibaar. Bye bye.**Maa, hold yourself together theek aache? I'll call you up.*

No don't call me, I'll talk to you again when I feel like, okay?

Okay.

Bye.

Bye.

(Piano music playing on the call)

It has been 450 days since I last saw you outside of a screen and 12 minutes of watching you inside of it on a couch pushed to the offwhite wall. Seeing you in your stillness, I learn that the couch occupies the majority of the room and your body on it: closer to the exit. I am the one among three of your children to be thinking about you in this way: 8,000 kilometers away, A Thursday morning spent staring at you and the brown tea stain at the bottom on my cup, head bowed between my palms, whispering every word for the rest of the day.

(Maa singing *Aami Chini Go Chini* on the phone)

Cheryl Mukherji



Cheryl Mukherji, **Promise Me**, 2020, video, 7:37 min, Courtesy of the artist
Self Portrait with Maa, 2024, inkjet print, Courtesy of the artist

The dining table scene feels familiar, yet remains distant. The motif is drawn from a first-reader school primer and translated into a precise metal drawing. Installed like a front garden fence within the space, the object deliberately blocks a passageway, intervening in the open architecture of the exhibition. One can see through it but not pass through. This spatial placement turns a domestically staged situation into a public one. At its center is not the family itself but a table ensemble with a dinner service. Both the upper and lower edges frame the motif and quote syllables from the primer *Lesen und Lernen* (Reading and Learning, 1966): “PA PA AM” and “MA MA AM.” The formal execution remains deliberately sober. A precise laser cut outlines the scene recalling the characteristic hues of historical East German fences. Material, colour, and scale anchor the work in a specific visual memory and carry it into the present.

Curriculum (Lesen und Lernen, p. 7) continues Sichling’s long-term engagement with fences and demarcations. Fences mirror expectations, sort bodies, and create an image of community. Sichling makes use of their double meaning, relating it to the ambivalence inherent in educational materials. These promise security by offering order yet subtly codify roles — who cooks, who sits, who looks, and who is seen. The scene remains unoccupied.

The composition of table setting, chairs, and primer syllables asserts “family” as an order that pre-scribes roles and defines belonging. Absence, in turn, marks those who are not considered, revealing the exclusions embedded within this visual logic. The work exposes how didactic imagery produces expectations and erases deviations, while lived realities are far more diverse and contradictory. In doing so, it opens a space in which familiar images can be reread, and care emerges as a quiet practice of attention.

Su-Ran Sichling, HNN, MDP



Su-Ran Sichling, **Curriculum (Lesen und Lernen, S. 7)**
2025, steel, laser-cut, welded, lacquered, Courtesy of the artist



Leonard Suryajaya, *Parting Gift*
2022–, photo installation with wallpapers and six photographs mounted on Dibond
Courtesy of the artist

In *Parting Gift*, staged photography merges with elements of collage to form dense image spaces filled with patterns, fabrics, and props. Colour, texture, and gesture overlap until a rhythm emerges from the apparent chaos. The series explores queer self-assertion within the tension between familial expectations and migrant experience, where adaptation is often assumed.

The work marks a biographical turning point: after 18 years in the United States, Suryajaya became a US citizen. This decision required him to renounce his Indonesian citizenship. *Parting Gift* is both a farewell and an offering. This loss echoes an older wound: in the 1920s, the artist's grandfather fled China in search of safety, only to face persecution in Indonesia as part of the Chinese minority. In 1965, hundreds of thousands fell victim to violence. The family survived, but silence and assimilation became the price of belonging. Growing up Buddhist in a predominantly Muslim society and educated in Christian schools, Suryajaya learned to adapt and to erase traces in order to stay safe.

These lessons persist. In parts of Indonesia, queerness remains criminalized, and his marriage is not legally recognized. In the United States, migration and queer rights continue to be contested. Between collective expectation and individual exception lies a tension that resists resolution. For Suryajaya, art becomes a means of enduring and inventing — a way to take root

between nations and norms without choosing sides.

Parting Gift began as a documentation of his sister's wedding and pregnancy. Seen through the eyes of a queer brother denied the same recognition, the work transformed into a meditation on family and loss. When his sister lost the child, grief became the driving force of the series. Suryajaya and his husband mourned in Chicago. Later, in Indonesia, the artist staged a family portrait around a small coffin, together with his sister, parents, and in-laws. The image breaks taboos and turns mourning into visibility.

Suryajaya works with a large-format film camera, yet his process resembles community theatre: relatives and friends participate, and the images are carried by props, humour, tenderness, and contradiction. *Parting Gift* seeks no resolution. The series lives in the question of belonging — it speaks of roots that hold when tested, and of love that demands responsibility. Out of loss, a truth endures.

Leonard Suryajaya, HNN, MDP



Leonard Suryajaya, *Mom's Heaven*, 2025

Where the colonizer undresses her, the native's nakedness stares back at him both as the defiled image of his creation and as the indifferent gaze that says, "there was nothing – no secret – to be unveiled underneath my clothes. That secret is your phantasm"

(Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*, 1993, p. 52 Indiana University Press)

A multichannel video installation unfolds through three simple gestures: a baby is bathed in a river, fed, and rocked to sleep. The roles are performed primarily by single mothers, queer Southeast Asian diasporic women in Berlin. The audience sees from the baby's perspective and hears lullabies – remembered and newly sung by trans women from the Philippines, Thailand, and Laos. With each repetition, proximity and distance, care and desire begin to shift. The work opens a space where transfeminine womanhood, queer reproduction, and ancestral technologies come into resonance. At its core lies the principle of chosen kinship, offering grounding within queer communities while demanding unconditional recognition. The care work of women and trans women from the Global South becomes visible yet is also questioned as a potentially exploitative relation. Looking through the lens of Pha Kee Ma – a pre-colonial menstrual technology –

and reflecting on the tourist gaze, the installation reveals Western fantasies of the "native mother". The figures on-screen turn toward one another only half-heartedly, like children who have lost their way. In doing so, the work thus touches on the long history of appropriation and devaluation of Indigenous cultures, a history that persists whenever intimacy becomes the stage for a gaze shaped by colonial desire.

Video: *Sarnt Utamachote*, with support from Nordic Media House (Klaus Salminen and Christine Paulus)

Cast: Panlert Sriprom, Kodchawarn Chaiyabutr, Krisanta Caguioa-Moennich, Lea Millares-Sylvester, Riako Napitupulu, Raras Theresa Farah Umaratih, Ayra Velasquez Dimaapi, Nguyen Phuong Huyen, Yustina Haryanti

Lullaby Contributors: Nikki, Bee, Vanasay Khamphommala, Fan Wu
Sound Studio Recording: Tobias Purfürst

Sarnt Utamachote, HNN, MDP



Sarnt Utamachote, *I am not your mother*
2020/2025, three-channel video installation, audio work, 14 min
The work was commissioned by Darunee Terdtoontaveedj for the International Film Festival
Rotterdam 2020. Courtesy of the artist

Imprint

Nothing as Our Ground

28.11.2025 – 03.08.2026

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