

Susan Almazol

I capture on food- stained paper one Filipina woman's enduring efforts to feed her children. That woman is my 93 mother whose life has narrowed down to eating, sleeping, singing, and playing a keyboard with her right hand.

Mostly silent during meals, most meals served in bed now, Mama nonetheless continues the Filipino tradition of cajoling others to eat, making sure everyone is eating, ever mindful of how much they eat.

Like a prayer, I have written over and over again what she says to me over and over again because she has dementia and can't remember what she has just said. These are her words which form the background text of my "Let's Eat" hanging: *Sit down. Let's eat. Do you have your food? I do all the cooking. Get your food. Come on. Let's eat. We have plenty to eat. How come you are not eating yet? Want to taste? Did you have enough to eat? Have you eaten? Did you have enough to eat? Go get your plate. Let's eat. Go get something to eat. Why don't you eat? We have lots of food. Do you have enough to eat? Time to eat.*

Like diary extracts, I also record three of Mama's stories about feeding us. I grew up hearing these stories. Appropriately, these stories protrude from the hanging, calling attention to the life that has been lived centered on the feeding of children. The text of the three diary extracts is as follows:

1944 – Running away from the bombs in Manila, I drank muddy water from holes we dug in the ground. This kept my breast milk flowing enough to feed my baby boy.

1950 – I fed my 4-year old son all the eggs he wanted – sometimes 8 fried eggs at breakfast – when we were living in Tokyo...before our house burned down to the ground.

1953 – I fed my children wet pancit when we first lived in Ocean, California. I didn't know then I had to pour out the soaking water for the rice sticks, before adding the rice sticks to the pot.

Like the food stained recipes that Mama shared with me over 40 years ago and which I still use to recreate her traditional Filipino dishes, I used walnut ink, turmeric water, beet juice, coffee, and oil splashes to mimic the original stains on these new renderings of her stories and recipes.

I offer deep appreciation to Mama and also to Cynthia Tom and Cris Matos for inspiration and guidance.

Salma Arastu

Preparing and then serving the food is important part of our Indian culture. Mealtimes are important occasions for family to get together. Most meals comprise of several dishes ranging from staples like rice and breads to meat and vegetables and rounded off with a dessert. The common thread that runs through most Indian food though is the use of numerous spices to create flavor and aroma.

My mother used to rise early in the morning and after her prayers would enter the kitchen to plan and prepare the three meals of the day elaborately. This ritual of preparation would end in serving the hot food on a table or “Dasterkhan” which was a cotton fabric spread on the floor and the family sat around it.

If there was a celebration the extended family and guests were invited. The elders sat in the middle and children sat close to their mothers who served the food onto their plates. Special dishes were created with rich spices and ingredients like saffron, cardamom etc. Depending on the occasion sometimes men and women were served separately in different chambers.

In India there are certain important traditional ways in which food is prepared, presented and served at different occasions or festivals. Memories from my growing up years are filled with the images of those traditions. Those traditions also weave through my artwork when I express myself in miniature style paintings, or when I paint groups of people celebrating life.

Wedding Dinner being Served

The Private Lunch served on the Terrace

Men and Women eating in separate chambers in the tent

Personal maid serving lunch in the courtyard

Sigi Arnejo

Passion drives my creativity. The emotional attachment to my pieces stem from my personal stories and social issues. I experiment with found materials and multiple textures to create pieces that are curious and thought provoking. Because my work is inspired by my life, it is a journey that takes the shapes, forms, sights, and sounds and brings my experiences to the artwork.

As a conceptual artist working with sound and performance I have worked with Southern Exposure Gallery, Version 5, in Chicago, and am a Whitney Museum of American Art Biennial alumni.

“No More Sundays” is a visual tribute to my father and the Filipino migrant workers that I grew up with. My father and the guys would come over on Sundays and have dinner with my family. When my father died it reminded me of the wonderful time I had as a child with my "uncles", and the realization that there would be No More Sundays.

For me this work is a reminder of how hard Filipino migrant workers work. They are a large part of how food gets to our tables, yet little recognized for their contribution.

Jung Ran Bae

Title: Poignant Truth

2013

After consuming the same brand of tea for many years, the tiny note attached at the end of the teabag string caught my eye for the first time in 2006. The quote on the back of the tea tag was like an epiphany because of the state of my mind at that moment. I was amused by my own reaction and I found myself looking for the quote on the next tea tag every time I drink a cup of tea. The tiny quotes resonated my heart and I began collecting them, perhaps, I had a subconscious wish that if I kept the tea tags, the precious message will stay in my heart as a compass that will lead me to take wiser steps in life.

The unexpected realization from the message deeply inspired and it penetrated my mind as a very powerful message as I read it for years.

The work came into being as it accumulated in few years. The work went through a lengthy gestation period and gradually an authentic atmosphere began taking shape on its own. The process was rather spontaneous and discovered to possess a powerful meaning as insignificant object and experience of the ordinary daily activity.

Mitsuko Brooks

My collages speak of the Americanized “Chinese” takeout restaurants which are examples of cultural assimilation, one of the many facets of the Asian Diaspora. Chinese fast food takeout restaurants popular in towns and cities worldwide, speak to a commodification and alteration: mixing the perceived other with the familiar. Dishes like Shrimp Lo Mein taste and look very different than the original dish. In a way, I feel these meals debase the nostalgic taste of our mother’s food. When I place these Americanized dishes on top of historical antique objects as if they were trophies, I exalt them, but also question the validity of cultural assimilation in America.

Having grown up in predominantly white towns and being the only Asian student in my class, and the only student of color, I have developed a hypersensitivity to my otherness; both physical and cultural. As a hapa haole who does not speak her mother tongue and has not set foot on Japanese soil since 1983, I have a deep longing to connect to my roots. A steaming plate of Okonomiyaki, Mabo Don, or an Onigiri shaped by my mother’s salted hands are all objects of a strong cathexis. The sensory resonance of familiar flavor on my tongue makes me feel at once “home” with my culture and connected to my mother.

KaYan Cheung

This piece examines my family's history through each generation's particular relationship to food. It explores how commodified and non-commodified forms of our culture have been implicated in that history.

My father immigrated from Hong Kong to the United States for a better life, but ended up working long hours in terrible conditions as a dim sum chef. In fact, he had to migrate again -- from New York's Chinatown to Detroit in order to find a job that paid a little better so he could provide for his family. The economics of the restaurant industry made his life one of never being home.

I was excited to explore how the fantasy of mouth-watering delicacies offered up by Chinese restaurants conceals the lived experience of labor and suffering behind the kitchen doors. But this project also helped me see that food connects his

generation to mine, and to my grandmother's. Tracking the progression from my grandmother's deprivation through my father's jobs and then into my own experience as a restaurant patron and an organizer of restaurant workers has given me a different understanding of what it means to sit down and eat together as a family.

Karen Chew

Lessons from Mom

Before Asian American Studies 6A and Amy Tan, my mother was my main provider of Chinese tales of family and folklore. As my feet dangled from the kitchen stool, my mom offered a new lesson about the meaning of the foods we were about to enjoy. Whether a family meal, a gift for a friend, or something for our home, she took great care and attention in its preparation and presentation. Embracing the lesson of wholeness, Mom was the first one to toss a chipped plate and always had the butcher include the heads and tails of the roast ducks and soy sauce chickens. While never claiming to be superstitious, she kept the numbers even, the amounts generous, and all forgotten platters were happily returned with a thank you treat.

This series of mixed media work surfaced in 2012 as homage to food, family, and culture.

Flora Choi

The newly coined term, 'Muk-Bang', is a combination of the Korean verb 'muk-da', (meaning 'to eat'), and 'bang-song' (meaning 'on air'). In the past year, there has been an increase of virtual broadcasting channels in Korea where viewers can watch another person eat on a live stream. Live broadcasts last from one to six hours. Each broadcast features someone enjoying a massive amount of food in front of the camera (enough to feed 8-10 people). During the "meal", he/she describes each food in detail, from taste, to texture and smell. 'Muk-Bang' is a form of entertainment for many, digital companionship for some, and also a subcultural sexual fetish for others.

For *Eating Culture*, I will set up my own 'Muk-Bang' and provide a live online stream to the gallery. Visitors will be invited to interact with my character via Skype. My character will be wearing a traditional Korean gown, and her hair will be braided into a 5-foot long 'Daeng'gi braid'. The 'Daeng'gi' braid is a recurring theme in my work, and was worn in dynastic Korea by young, single, Korean women. Throughout the broadcast, visitors may watch me eat in the style of "Muk-Bang". Visitors are welcome to chat, eat, ask questions, and etc. during the "Muk-Bang" stream. Each performance, or "Broadcast", will last 1-2 hours. There will be a schedule provided with the dates and times of the live broadcasts.

Melissa Chow

These five photographs are offshoots of an ongoing series that began in 2006 called “Autobiography” which focuses on plates of food after my consumption. The five shown here have more of a social aspect and/or are consumed by others.

The act of eating represents all aspects of life – nourishment, social gatherings, loneliness, a break, indulgence, luxury or lack thereof, a time to think, a time to share. A common theme that I work with is remains – how our acts are represented by the things we leave behind and how these items are indications of our personalities. In this case, the remains from the act of eating tell us a little about the occupants who sat before these plates. It’s simultaneously beautiful, disgusting, and intriguing.

Samantha Chundur

Food plays an integral role in defining any culture. Food has not only provided a cultural identity to APA communities but has also helped the community re-define the 'idea' of food in the US. Today, people are as familiar with 'samosa' as they are with 'pasta' – a testimony to the impact of our culinary heritage.

This exhibition fascinated me for a number of reasons. Food, as the brief mentions, conjures up 'memories of home, love and warmth' and 'reinforces our cultural identity'. The same holds true for my art. My two pieces are primarily inspired by the spices from the Indian kitchen.

The colors in 'Mahotiha & Manika (Eggplant & Ruby)' are inspired by the vibrant hue of red chilies- the spice which is a staple in Indian cuisine – and eggplant, which is also extensively used.

'Agni (Fire)' is inspired by the rich color of 'turmeric', an essential spice long-used in Indian dishes for its medicinal qualities.

The awareness of ingredients such as turmeric, which might have once been considered exotic, is as commonplace as oregano – such has been the influence our communities have had.

Kay Cuajunco

"Bibingka" is a short film that explores how recipes tell stories of migration and cultural survival through the lens of Filipino foods. Behind every recipe there are countless memories of celebration, ritual, and comfort that allow us to reclaim our connection to the land, family, and home. Bibingka is one of the first Filipino desserts I learned how to cook with my mom and the smell of which always reminds me of home. Throughout the silent journey of making this dessert from looking through the aisles for ingredients to putting it into the oven, you can hear stories about Filipino food to narrate the feelings and memories of love, care, absence, and frustration that come up while cooking and reflect different degrees of connection to homeland. Featuring voices from the Filipino diaspora and a kulintang soundtrack, "Bibingka" awakens our senses to the urgency to keep the legacy of our traditional foods alive.

Alison Ho

My relationship with Ho Hos has been strained since my fellow elementary school classmates came to the brilliant realization that my last name and the product's were the same. In facing my own issues with body image, I embrace their taunts of “I’m eating you” and devour myself. I believe that food is an accessible entry point in exploring cultural identity. My work with food involves mass produced, prepackaged, single-serving, snacks that my audience has a preexisting relationship with. Through this lens, I can subvert that relationship to find unexpected ways to communicate issues of otherness and body. Food, paired with humor, gives the audience a chance to laugh and provides a non-threatening opportunity to reflect on how these issues pertain to them.

Grace Jahng Lee

As a Korean immigrant woman, the importance of food in Asian cultures has been ingrained in me since childhood. My work concerns the expression of love through food in Asian families. Instead of saying “I love you,” my parents, as is common in many Asian families, showed me their affection by serving me large quantities of meat, a luxury they lacked while growing up in poverty in Korea during the 1940’s-1970’s. Meat served as the center of father-daughter bonding in my family. Through an essay that examines my experience of becoming a vegetarian during the late 1980’s at age ten and the decade-long struggle that ensued with my parents over my decision, I illustrate how my family’s obsession with meat is intricately connected to histories of war and the U.S. occupation of Korea. What does it mean for a young immigrant girl to reject meat? How do we as immigrants and children of immigrants reconcile our personal ethics in a collectivist culture where the family, not the individual, is the key unit? I hope that my excerpt will lead viewers of the Eating Cultures exhibition to reconsider notions of vegetarianism, as well as expressions of love and sacrifice in APA families and communities. I am also drawn to Eating Cultures due to the unique opportunity to exhibit with a group of Asian American women artists.

Christine Toy Johnson

FOOD. LOVE. FAMILY

(Literary) Variations on a theme by Christine Toy Johnson

1. "Hawaii is the Place for You and Me" (Song lyrics – 2013; music by David A. Shenton)
2. DO THESE GENES MAKE ME LOOK FAT? (Short play – 2011)
3. "EVER SEE A FAT CHINESE?" (Short play – 2008)
4. HALO, HALO BIRTHDAY (Short play – 2012)

Zilka Joseph

This exhibition is of interest to me because it is about subjects I care passionately about: food and culture. To me they are inseparable, and the fact that these subjects have the potential to reveal aspects of social and personal history, the complexities of immigration and assimilation, and give insights into inclusion and discrimination, to name just a few, is intriguing. My poem reflects longing as well as defiance and pride, in something so small yet powerful as an Indian herb, Dhanya Patta.

Genevieve Erin O'Brien

All In A Day's Work

A meditation on labor and on the arduous tasks performed by minimum-wage workers in the food service industry. This video was recorded on the clock, at work, when the artist's employer demanded that she scrub a container for an entire 8-hour shift.

Genevieve Erin O'Brien

Family Potluck

Potlucks are a vital way that families, chosen families, and communities come together. We wanted to capture and preserve that moment of reaching the table to take in the collective feast, surrounded by people, conversation and connection.

Genevieve Erin O'Brien

Place Setting

The visual dance and choreography of plates, silverware and glassware portrays the ebb and flow of romantic relationships and one of the primary languages of communication – food. The ritual of setting the table and clearing the table offers the space for us to contemplate the cycle of love and relationships: seeking, finding and losing love. Reset.

Jessica Redmond, "halo-halo" (2014)

My Lola (tagalog for "grandmother"), who emigrated from the Philippines, was heavily invested in assimilating our family into American culture. Thus, as a child, my understanding of our heritage was kind of mixed, if not missing. One thing that anchored my knowledge was cuisine. My favorite dish was "halo-halo" ("mix-mix"), an iced dessert that can be made up of ingredients including: grass jelly, jack fruit, chick peas, red beans, coconut, ube (purple yam) ice cream, corn, flan, rice puffs, cheese, maraschino cherries, and more.

As a developing nation, the Philippines has had a way of taking up disparate ingredients and gleefully mashing them together (e.g., cheese ice creams, hot dog spaghetti, spam fried rice). Influenced by the cuisines of Spanish and American colonizers, and also through the economic need to make rich food from cheap ingredients, Filipino cuisine seems to take adversity and difference and joyfully reinterpret them through food. It's a "halo-halo culture," and is evident in the way the media comments on the "resilience" or the adaptability of the Filipino spirit in the wake of natural disasters like Typhoon Haiyan. Ultimately, there's no defined structure of what halo-halo has to be. Every family has a different version, and they're all correct.

In my sculpture installation, I've rendered all of the ingredients of halo-halo white, a "paint-by-numbers" version of halo-halo, as it serves as both a symbol of my heritage and also of the Filipino spirit.

Juliana Kang Robinson

My current work *Territorial (the Mama bear drawings)*, contemplates the manifestations of territoriality, in particular the hoarding of food, as a means of exerting power.

Food plays a central role in the way people define culture, status and wealth. My drawings investigate how food contributes to territorial behaviors and cultures of deprivation or excess. *The Mama Bear* drawings began as my way of processing current events on the lack of food security in North Korea, and theories on how it hinders the reunification of the Koreas.

North Koreans live in a culture shaped greatly by constant food deprivation. While more than 40% of the children there suffer from chronic malnutrition, those in power like dictator Kim Jong Un, flaunt excess with extravagant gourmet dinner parties. In *Mounds of Gochu*, bears clothed in traditional Korean dress, hanbok, guard their mounds of gochu (chili peppers), locked in a territorial growling match. The bears reference the Korean creation mythology, and the gochu, an essential ingredient in kimchee, represents wealth, resources and power.

The micro and macro-level consequences related to the domination and control of essential resources are evident all around us both at home and abroad. This work can reference specifically the North Korean leadership hoarding food from its own people, such as military leaders keeping United Nations food donations from the general population. Or the work can also be seen more broadly as commentary on the gross over-consumption of global resources by developed countries.

Larry Lee and Jason Dunda

International Chefs of Mystery! Larry Lee and Jason Dunda channel their inner Yan Can Cook and the Swedish Chef for the first time and whip up a half hour of culinary video tomfoolery for Booze and Bacon at slow gallery in Chicago (with special thanks to Brook Sinkinson Winthrow).

Theresa Loong

My father is only half kidding when he tells me that as a prisoner of war in Japan during WWII, he and the other prisoners were so hungry, they didn't talk about girls – all they talked about was food. This segment of “Every Day Is a Holiday” explores the idea of food, history and memory.

During the course of filming my feature-length documentary, “Every Day Is a Holiday,” my father surprised me by revealing a Hershey's wrapper from a bar of chocolate that came from a care package dropped by B-29 bombers shortly after V-J Day.

I am a Chinese American interactive media artist, trained in social anthropology, and born of Chinese parents from Malaysia and Taiwan. I create intergenerational storytelling experiences focused on memory, identity, and immigration through the use of film, games and apps.

As part of my work, I examine our social fabric by talking about the way food memories and traditions lend themselves to the exploration of other emotional, socioeconomic and humanities topics.

Mieko Meguro

Born in Hokkaido, Japan, I now live and work in New York City. Here, I make sculptures, oil and water color paintings, photographs, and picture books. In addition to being an artist, I'm the founder and director of 3A Gallery, which opened in September, 2011.

Michiko Murakami

It is my understanding that the last thing to ever leave a family's cultural identity is food. This has been the case for my family. I am able to speak Japanese because my mother was born and raised in Japan and she forced her children to attend the dreaded Saturday Japanese school for many years. Though many of my relatives can speak very little Japanese and much less, read or write it, one thing that we all know very well is the food. Food has become the way my grandparents and aunts get their extended family to come and visit. It has been a unifying force as the children have become very busy adults.

Somehow SPAM has become very popular among Asians and Asian Americans and I have known SPAM all my life. Plus, my father is addicted to meat. He has had to have bacon, sausage, hot dogs, corned beef hash, and SPAM at all times in our home. Maybe I wanted to rebel against everything; I decided to become vegetarian at fifteen.

In many ways, my father and I are exact opposites. But I respect him for doing the best that he could with what he had. He is All-American, a Vietnam War vet, he loves red meat and going to movies. I understand why he is the way he is. Still, it is difficult to negotiate that he truly loves a country where he and his children are hyphenated Americans.

Margaret Rhee

In 2000, artist Ray Beldner received a fellowship to Korea. He decided to make a dynamic bust of Douglas MacArthur made all out of Kimchi. The artist stated: “I united our two countries by combining two of our traditional „products“ into a silly temporary monument to the general.” Yet, for the Korean American feminist, the MacArthur kimchi bust provokes questions on the politics of empire, food, art, and feminism. As historian Ji-Yeon Yuh’s “Cooking American, Eating Korean” demonstrates, kimchi is not simply a “product,” but served as emotional sustenance for 1950’s Korean military brides. Spurred by Yuh’s Korean diasporic feminist history and the Beldner’s bust, I wrote a poem in response, and the poem “A Feminist History of Kimchi” was published in the anthology *Conversations at the Wartime Cafe* in 2011. For my own practice, the poem prompted an ongoing feminist exploration—methods, poetics, and histories—of kimchi.

The project evolved into my current visual and participatory poetry project, “A Feminist History of Kimchi” which includes the “Kimchi Poetry Project” where over 350 people have contributed poetry lines for 12 poems using collaborative methods of “kimchi” writing. Additionally, selected lines from my poem “A Feminist History of Kimchi” has been fermenting in small bottles as visual poetry pieces, entitled accordingly, like “Kimchi Poetry Bottle: Skin.”

“A Feminist History of Kimchi” is a visual, literary, and participatory examination of the role of food, women, and poetry within mainstream, Asian American, and particularly Korean American communities. My project asks: What feminist methods, histories, and stories can we unearth and create through the poetics of kimchi?

Yoshie Sakai

Come One, Eat All

In “Come One, Eat All”, I concoct my own cultural icon as an animated “adult-girl” doll child, whose only objective is to endlessly and tirelessly eat fast food (McDonald’s French fries and Kentucky Fried Chicken) and junk food (Lay’s potato chips, powdered donuts, chocolate bars, and M&Ms) at a frenetic pace, as moving images of amusement park rides sped up considerably cause a mesmerizing and nauseating sensation for the viewer. Along with the creepy soundtrack “Carnival of Souls” by Combustible Edison and screaming noises from the people on the rides, I attempt to convey the vicious cycle of dizzying consumption and the irrepressible nature of overindulgence unnaturally forced upon us by the marketplace.

Hot Side Story

“Hot Side Story” is a short musical video inspired by West Side Story’s tale of two rival gangs, the Jets and the Sharks, which parallels the ethnic and cultural diversity within American society and its struggle for acceptance. However, before any sort of tragedy can happen as it did in West Side Story, in “Hot Side Story,” the two sides of Sriracha/Tapatío (spicy) and Heinz Ketchup/French’s Mustard (non-spicy) find a way of reconciliation by joining their powers to create harmony and variety with a spicy BBQ sauce. I wanted to show the strength in collaboration of seemingly different entities, as no one person is a success on their own but need the help of others in a community to realize change for the better.

Shizue Seigel

My Mother and Patsy Smith

At first glance, “My Mother and Betty Crocker” seems an affectionate and nostalgic look at classic 1950s “American” food: hamburgers, hotdogs, cookies and milk, Chinese take-out, and sushi, arrayed on a child’s toy oven. The text emerging out of the oven reveals a Japanese American girl longing to be “normal” in an all-white neighborhood. She reads the “Betty Crocker Cookbook” for hours, looking for cues on how to be normal in the days when “American” automatically meant white.

The piece invites reflection on the role of food in the assimilation of immigrants. The artist’s immigrant grandmother grew and made traditional foods, including sake and pickles. The success of large prewar farms like hers contributed to the hostility that led to the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. In contrast, the artist’s second-generation mother felt “stupid” because she can’t bake cupcakes, while the third-generation artist was seduced by brightly colored images of canapés and tomato aspic, which are long out of fashion. Little did she know that Betty Crocker was not a real person but a commercial icon fabricated by General Mills to sell enriched flour, Bisquik and cake mixes.

Today, most Americans don’t even have time for cake mix. They are addicted to unhealthy fast food and additive-heavy processed food. The extraordinary longevity of Japanese and Japanese Americans is often attributed to traditional foods in their diet, but the artist suspects that take-out sushi and instant ramen don't have the same magic powers.

Pallavi Sharma

The video installation “In Memory of...” is a way to re-view our own understanding of ourselves, and let go the labels and peripheries set for us. The work delves into the interrelation of food culture and patriarchy in South Asian society and speaks about how it dictates every part of our lives. It addresses gender as a social construct, and on a personal level, attempts to liberate myself by deconstructing it. Gender is so deeply embedded in our ideas, beliefs, actions and desires that it almost appears natural.

“Women couldn’t be oppressed if there was no such thing as ‘women’....doing away with gender is key to the doing away with patriarchy...Gender fluidity is the ability to freely and knowingly become one or many of limitless number of genders, for any length of time.”[i]

Jessica Tang

Much of my work focuses on the idea of dualism in Asian-American identity and culture. As a part of that concept, I have found that food and food related objects also hold their own cultural dualism. Objects like the take out box have a unique cultural significance in America but bring it to China and the meaning changes. This box is a Chinese object in America but becomes wholly American in China.

In my pieces I sought to highlight this odd relationship between two cultures as expressed through food and food objects. My embroidered sculptures mimic this cultural dualism by replicating a take out box, cup noodle container, and a Chinese bowl. These sculptures are recognizable in the new medium but no longer have the same functionality as the original.

Cynthia Tom

Stop Eating Our Women and Children.

A lasagna of discarded humans of a twisted Cantonese past .

Cynthia Tom, a third generation Cantonese American and native San Franciscan, has been working on little pillows representing discarded people in her life, her mother, her father and her grandmother. This lasagna pie also includes an image of “A Chinese Slave Girl” photo by Arnold Gente of the early 1900’s in SF Chinatown. The soft touch is a contradiction in sweetness and tough subject matter, inspiring swift shifts of emotions.

Cynthia’s grandmother was purchased in 1923 by a Stanford Palo Alto born, Chinese American man. Her clan’s uncle delivered her to him in Hong Kong two days before their marriage. There was no passenger ticket for Hom Shee Mock; we conclude that she traveled in the cargo hold.

Cynthia’s mother was traded for opium during her prepubescent years and sexually abused while she spent some of her childhood at a home for asthmatic Chinese children in San Jose.

Richard, Cynthia’s father, was purchased in China in 1922 at the age of one and brought in as the false or paper son by the Toms, Oakland, CA. He was regularly abused by the couple that bought him and ran away at age 15 to ride the rails, then joined CCC, Ca Conservation Corp.

These discoveries about Cynthia’s grandmother, father and her mother inspired her to look at using her art to capture silent stories, honor women warriors and encourage women to own their own power. Her art is not meant to shock, but rather to encourage critical thinking, playing with stereotypes as a way of breaking them.

Frances Kai-Hwa Wang

“Did you eat? means...I love you” is a multimedia prose poetry and photography piece inspired by the Blacklava t-shirt of the same name exploring the expression “Did you eat?” and how it cross-culturally does not really mean “Did you eat?” in many Asian and Asian American cultures. How many of us have been fed into submission by doting aunties and grandmothers because we answered that question honestly? How surprised have we been to find ourselves doing the same to others? And what happens when we live with others who do not understand this fundamental aspect of our culture/ ourselves? The stories in the prose move across time and are punctuated with photographs that capture static happy moments of family and food in the same way that our relationships are always moving, although anchored by moments and meals.

The prose poem is enlarged and mounted simply in a large picture frame amidst photographs of food and family (plus one recipe card) as they might be tacked randomly over time onto both doors of the refrigerator, evoking the family kitchen, memories of childhood, wacky grandparents, foodporn, favorite recipes, and funny family stories.

This exhibition is of interest because as I write about the Asian Pacific American experience, I find that food is a certain connector. Food is often how we ground ourselves and find ourselves, how we create home and community. Sharing food adds flavor, texture, and meaning to our relationships, whether the others know how to read it or not.

Michael Watson

For the past year, I have been exclusively using rice as a substance in my art. Through sculpture, installation and performance, I have experimented with rice's various states, from burning it to grinding it into paint.

Initially I was drawn to rice because I was searching for a material that I am intimately invested in both historically and culturally. Growing up in a Filipino-American household, rice was a staple meal around the table. As I ate rice and listened to my mother tell stories of the Philippines and her family there I realized the only thing we still had in common with them was that we both ate rice.

Rice has many qualities that possess both practical and spiritual implications. It is a multicultural and economically diverse food that takes many forms, yet at the same time it can be an individual's primary source of sustenance and life. For that reason, I see a lot of potential to connect through my work across a wide range of cultures and ideologies.

Using rice as the intermediary in my art, I am interested in the intersection of corporeality and the metaphysical revealed through rituals of life, burial, and afterlife.

Maggie Wong

My grandmother, Siu Fong Yu Wong, and I never spoke the same language. As an immigrant Chinese mother working in her husband's laundry in Los Angeles Siu Fong Yu Wong (or Pooh), in many ways was silenced. Being a mixed race girl born in the Bay Area, the depth of my Chinese fluency floated on the tops of bowls of duck noodles and in Pooh's meatballs. Food always drove communication between my grandmother and I, as well as between my grandmother and American society. Her meatballs typified her assimilation to nineteen-fifties housewifery (as did her jello), while still having the flavor of a dumpling.

In an odd turn of events, Pooh spent the last few years of her life in the culinary heartland of the states, the South. She came to live the American dream, living in a respectable suburb of Atlanta. Ironically, just two states over in Mississippi, resided the Whittingtons, my white maternal family line. This southern confluence had complexity woven like a latticework pie crust. And it was indeed pie that was the only way I could speak with Pooh about ideas of place, domesticity, labor, and culture. So one afternoon using pecans, eggs, flour, butter, and sugar we talked.

This piece, *Ingredients for Pecan Pie*, is an assemblage of that conversation.

Ingredients for Pecan Pie is also in honor of dear Pooh, who after a long life past away this February.

Leslie Zeitler

Of both Chinese and German descent, Leslie W. Zeitler lost both her mother and maternal aunt to suicide on the Chinese side of her family. As highly taboo subjects in Asian American communities, depression and suicide are often hidden by family members and communities. Asian American women aged 15-24 are 1.3 times more likely than non-Hispanic White women to die by suicide (CDC, 2011) and are simultaneously far less likely (about one-fourth the utilization rate) than non-Hispanic White women to access mental health support services (US DHHS Office of Minority Health, 2010). Ms. Zeitler seeks creative methods to break the silence and bring attention to taboo subjects that consume us - such as depression and suicide - in Asian American and other communities.

Sara Zin

Quince Tea

This watercolor painting was inspired by my trip to Korea, where I met my biological family. During that time, food played an important role in connecting with my Korean heritage and crossing the difficult barriers of language, since I did not speak Korean and they did not speak English.

My favorite memory from this trip was when my father took me to a small café in Seoul's Insadong neighborhood called *The Smallest Café in the World*. It was run by the wife of the famous poet Ch'ôn Sang Pyông and specialized in Quince tea, a drink I had never tried before. As we enjoyed this lovely beverage together, I remember seeing the poem *Back to Heaven* written on the wall of the café.

When I asked what it meant, I was shown one of the books the café sold of Ch'ôn Sang Pyông works, which included an English translation of the poem. Since then my father has passed away, but when I think of him, I am reminded of the sweetness of quince and the beautiful poem.

Yeosu

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A memorable place I visited was Yeosu, where my family has lived for generations. Being so close to the water, seafood is an essential part of this region, providing nourishment as well as livelihood. My mother worked most of her life as a sea shucker, and one of the unique tastes from this trip was the combination of oysters and strawberries, which was served together for lunch. As I look back, I see this meal as representative of my mother's life, simple yet complex; A merging of sea and land, chaos and cultivation, salty and sweet.

Alana Lowe

It was a treat to spend the day with [Chitra](#) and her dad while we shot this piece and learned from a master. Chitra's father, Vishwani, shares his method of making chapati, also known as roti, a flat bread most commonly prepared in northern India. Vishwani grew up in Allahabad, one of India's oldest cities, where he learned to prepare chapatis by watching his mother and then as time went on, by refining his own technique. On the shoot, Vishwani told us about leaving home for college, which is when he first began making chapati. Later, when he met his wife, Prathima, he continued to make chapati. Prathima is from south India, where rice is more commonly served as a staple. To this day, Vishwani remains the primary chapati-maker of the house. And since Vishwani and Prathima make chapatis weekly, they've become masters. It seems like making any kind of bread dough takes some experimentation to get it right.

When I asked Vishwani about the importance of passing down the tradition, I was excited by his response. He pointed out that traditions are not a one way street. They aren't blindly passed on and can't be forced onto the next generation, but rather they are actively accepted, practiced and kept alive by the younger generation. It's refreshing to hear a different perspective and to consider that we are not just vessels but we are active participants in creating new traditions and keeping old traditions alive. Vishwani can teach what he knows, but it's up to Chitra to keep it going, if she so chooses. As he tells Chitra, he teaches procedure, technique is what you figure out on your own.

Vishwani and Prathima reside in Alabama, where they both work in the Computer and Electrical Engineering Department at Auburn University.

Chee Wang Ng

In my addressing the identity of the Chinese diaspora I use a Bowl of Rice as the leitmotif in my work for it nourishes and underpins the culture and the civilization.

Our traditional cultural may had been lost in translation and un-focus in the past but given the recent rise of China in the world arena and by the hard earn solid foundation our forebears had laid before us is enabling us to leap on new trajectories - we are set to soar for we have so much more to contribute to this more inclusive society.

I mine my heritage as an outreach to focus not in our differences but in the vitality of our contemporary diversity and the complexity of the global Chinese diaspora. There is a critical need to present my work in the correct context, and AAWAA's "Eating Culture" is the prefect exhibition for me to share my work to the wider audience in the West Coast and beyond. This opportunity will be my contribution to add my voice to all the other valid artists in the show as a singular choir to enable and empower us to grow to a better acceptance and positioning of ourselves not only as a minority in US but also the bigger majority in the lager global milieu. Let's eat Rice!

Cathy Lu

My work is an exploration of identity, drawing upon traditional Chinese imagery, to explore the liminal spaces between identity, culture, and gender.

In *china (Peach)*, I take found plates made out of various copies of porcelain and use ceramic glaze to paint them. I am fascinated by the history of porcelain, and how it became a popular export to Europe to the extent that it became known as 'china' due to birthplace. The painted images reference the Chinese genre of "100 Boys Playing", in which boys, the historically prized gender in Chinese culture, are depicted 'playing.' Their playing foreshadows their future successes in adulthood. In my china paintings, I replace the boys with girls. I am also interested in the intersection between 'play' and 'violence' for girls versus what it means for boys.

In addition to china painting, I am also slip casting produce found in Chinese markets, and recreating those fruits in stages of decay. I focus on the fruits displayed in the small altars seen in Asian markets and businesses. Like these fruits, migrating peoples find themselves crossing political borders, relocating to new habitats away from their places of origin. I am also interested in the juxtaposition of the permanence of the material (ceramic) with the impermanence of the decaying fruits.