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MISLED YOUTH

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Master of Fine Arts, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2022

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May, 2022

Acknowledgments

My Family

Mom, Dad, Tim, Lucky, Kingsley, Patty, Angelito, Norita, Cecile, Romulo, Angelisa, Grace, Adrian, Angelane, Patrick, Caitlin, Sarah, Cole, Alec, Angelot, Margaret, Mia, Isabel, Eva, Arlene, Bronte, Bernadette, Durell & Trinity.

My Sub-Culture Family

Sarah, Gabrielle, Chico, Chris, TXB, The Cardinal Sins, Hailey, Laura, Leah, KUBO, BezekLabs, Sicchio, Patrick, Jonathan, Paul, J-Smooth, Doug, Gabrielle's Dad & The Open Source Community.

Write code that make people smile.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
THE ROAD TO GREENER PASTURES	1
SUB-CULTURE FAMILY	8
CHASING THE AMERICAN DREAM	10
IN SEARCH OF NEW LIFE	16
BIBLIOGRAPHY	31

Abstract

MISLED YOUTH

By Mark Tan, MFA

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2022.

Major Director: Scott Braun, Craft/Material Studies - Wood

I'm a first generation Canadian who was born and raised in Toronto, Ontario by Asian immigrants. I have migrated to the United States and lived here for 7 years. Through my work, I express the emotional value of preconceived notions, disconnectedness and longing in search of finding place and acceptance within a community. Drawing from memory, personal narrative, emotion, and perception, I manipulate data into lines, forms, and materials through a subjective human experience from the lens of a non-citizen. By projecting the migration movement of my family lineage from China and the Philippines to Canada as well as my path to the United States, I am deconstructing and reconstructing meaning and purpose of fragmented identity. Through the use of statistical data that represents migration patterns, my own identification number, and metaphors around borders and access, I am exploring representations of phenomena, displacement, belonging, and defeat as a response to social and cultural order. Through my formal training as a woodworker, the work aims to communicate sympathy through hardship, accessibility and the desire of a migrant finding place. I produce aesthetically engaging sculptural forms made from reclaimed solid wood, found materials and domestic construction building materials at an architectural scale.

The Road to Greener Pastures

May 10th, 1975, was the day my grandmother, Cecile Del Rosario Tan and her husband Romulo Tan, immigrated to Canada. They boarded a plane with their 3 children, Arlene, my father Michael, and Bernadette, leaving their home and families behind in the Philippines. The Philippines were governed by martial law under the Marcos regime, putting the future of their family in question. They made a decision to leave the country. Saying goodbye to their family and leaving behind everything that represented home was a difficult decision to be made but what was waiting for them was a better life filled with opportunities in Canada.

Growing up in the Philippines, Cecile and Romulo already knew the English language. Their children, on the other hand, had to learn the language on their own during their first days in elementary school. Michael was so overwhelmed by this experience that he ended up running home and the teacher contacted Cecile to come sit with him at school the next day so he could feel more comfortable. The teacher told Cecile to not speak Tagalog, the language of the Philippines, in the house so that their children would have an easier transition in learning English. In order for them to become a Canadian family, they had to remove one more important part of their heritage, the Tagalog language, the language that my parents lost and the language I never grew up with. The culture that was lost during their immigration process. The transition of starting from scratch with no help after leaving their home country, their families and communities was a difficult process. A few years later, Romulo passed away, leaving Cecile isolated in a new country with only her children to take care of.

When Angelito, my other grandfather, was 8 years old he was under care from his grandparents in the remote island of Surigao province in the southern outskirts of the Philippines. After dinner one evening he flipped and scanned the pages of an atlas. In front of a lighted candle, he silently said to himself, “this is the country I would prefer to go and live.” His decision to migrate became an obsession of his young life. His mother, a devout catholic, prayed all the way to the altar starting from the steps of the church. With bloodied knees, she begged the Lord to help her son and his family get to Canada.

Angelito’s decision to migrate to Canada became an obsession of his young life. He worked towards this goal and it intensified with the belief that Canada was a better place for him to live and raise a family. He built the courage to forego all the possible risks and conditioned himself to face whatever consequences he may cross. He defeated the risks with intensity to arrive at his destination. His destination was to grow and live in a greener environment. It took him 26 years to realize that dream.

In 1972 Angelito applied to migrate to Canada at the embassy in the Philippines. After three years of waiting and anticipation this opportunity came to him and Norita; their application was approved. In August 1975, Angelito and Norita, immigrated to Canada leaving behind their children, Angelisa, Angelaine, my mother Angelica, and Angelot for a year while they tried to establish themselves in a new country, searching for a new life.

I was born in Scarborough, Ontario. A borough of Toronto, the largest multicultural city in the world. My parents, Michael and Angelica, were young when they met and decided to have my brother and I. The home we first lived in was our

grandparents' (Cecile & Romulo) house, it was the four of us plus my two aunts and our grandparents, the 8 of us shared that home. My parents decided that Scarborough was not the right neighborhood for us to grow up in and raise a young family, so the four of us moved to the town of Oakville, which is 20 minutes west of Toronto. We moved into our first home which was in an affordable housing townhome unit. This 2 bedroom corner townhome became a very important part of my childhood.

This neighborhood was full of children all relatively the same age, families from all backgrounds, some non english speaking. We were all in the same economic class. It was an immigrant rich neighborhood where class didn't matter, it wasn't recognized. We all shared the same toys, played all the same sports and rode the same school buses. Street hockey, basketball, bike rides, capture the flag, tobogganing, tree forts, snow forts, snowball fights, etc. were how we occupied our time outside until we heard one of our names being yelled from afar, which was when we knew it was time to go inside. This was our community, a diverse mix of cultural backgrounds that felt natural to me.

Sub Culture Family

A new family moved into our neighborhood from Croatia. I learned years later that this family escaped the Croatian war of independence, similar to Cecile & Romulo's story. They were forced to flee because of war and the uncertainty of the country's and family's future. His dad had bought him a new skateboard. I had never seen one before, or even the action of skateboarding. I asked him if I could try and I was instantly attached and found myself wanting more. Skateboarding videos in the early 90's always had sections of missed attempts, and I used to watch them on the computer through a

software downloading program. One of the first videos I watched was Mised Youth, by a company called Zero Skateboards. This video had a bail section with the song “You can’t always get what you want” by the Rolling Stones. As my eyes were glued to the computer screen watching that section, my dad walked by and asked, “are you sure you want to get into this?” Like many, he thought skateboarding was dangerous and not that serious. The next day, we went down to the local skate shop and purchased my first skateboard.

My best friend and I focused our attention on riding skateboards and learning new tricks, spending countless hours late into the evening, trying to grind all of the curbs we had waxed in our complex. As our small sub-culture family continued to grow as skateboarders in our neighborhood, we all shared the same dreams of becoming a professional skateboarder. With VHS or magazines being the only content available, we thought about how to improve our skateboarding abilities beyond what we had in our complex. An older group of teenagers in our neighborhood were competitive in BMX and had built their own ramps, so we approached them about making obstacles for us to skateboard on. They directed us to the construction site behind the complex and told us to collect the wood because it's free, and to bring extra materials back in order for them to help us. We gathered the materials and stored them in a garage where we intended to make a ramp. With the help of the BMX community and our parents, we collected the tools we needed: a jigsaw, 2 drills, a set of spade bits, a box of screws and a chop saw. Collectively, our sub-culture family came together to build an obstacle that was important to us, a place for us to share the same passion for skateboarding and building objects for us to express ourselves.

When we heard there was a new skatepark in town, we begged one of our moms to drive us down there so we could check it out. I remember the first time walking up to the entrance. It was a stimulating experience, witnessing a high volume of action being performed and watched by the recognizable faces we had seen in magazines and videos, and we were thrilled and intimidated to be in the same space with them. When you roll up to a new spot you have never been to before, when there's a heated session going down, who navigates the traffic? How do you perform under pressure when everyone is watching? Judging? Teaching? Learning? How do you decide what to do? Do you just sit on the sidelines watching and daydreaming and playing "what if" scenarios in your head? How do you decide if this is the right thing to do? Will they accept me, or will I be turned away? Before coming here, I was only getting small observations of a very tight sub-culture, and what that sub-culture provided was an alternative family. It's these moments of intimidation that informed my intuition and I decided that I belong here. Skateboarding is what sparked my interest in migrating to the United States, the best of the best skated in California, and I wanted to skate with them. My American dream was to be part of this culture, and the only way to accomplish this dream was to move to California.

Chasing the American Dream

My interest in making things led me to the Craft & Design Program at Sheridan College to concentrate on furniture design. Making do it yourself ramps for skateboarding to express our creativity transitioned into understanding building methods and concepts for designing furniture. Similar to skateboarding, this was taking an idea that was pure imagination put into action, and turned it into a reality. My

interest in woodworking was starting to parallel my dreams of becoming a professional skateboarder living in the United States.

On May 13th, 2014, I was 25 years old and received an opportunity to work in the United States. It was originally meant to be for 6 months, which eventually turned into 6 years. I presented a letter from the employer to the Customs Border Patrol officer and they demanded more clarification about "what kind of work" I was going to be doing in the United States. I was moved to a waiting room where I had to sit and wait for my name to be called, swiveling my head back and forth from the clock to my flight ticket hoping that my flight information had magically changed. As hours passed by, my name was finally called. My bags were ripped open and searched through, the letters I received from the employer were scattered over a desktop, as it looked like it was not strong enough material to prove I was worthy of authorization to work in the United States. After a back and forth dialogue proving why I was traveling to the United States my passport was opened up and stamped. It was the sound of the stamp forcing the ink into the paper in my passport that changed everything.

This process of going in between two states and the time spent in that transitional zone when one is in the process of becoming is the journey of transformation. As I waited at the Customs Border Patrol office to be cleared to enter the United States, I thought about Cecile losing Romulo, raising a family alone years after migrating to Canada. I thought about Angelo and Norita waiting 3 years for their opportunity to migrate to Canada. Embracing the tension between now and the next big thing, the journey of transformation, this is what liminality is all about. You can define space in many

different ways. Liminal spaces are transitional or transformative spaces. They are the waiting areas between one point in time and space and the next.

When I arrived in the United States, my cell phone was out of service and I had no other way to communicate with anyone. I decided not to accept the roaming charges for a long distance phone call on my cell phone and used a payphone to call my mom instead, to let her know that I made it to my final destination. We rarely use or even see payphones anymore, and every time I see one I remember that call.

I was employed at a non-profit arts organization in Colorado. The organization requested that I submit an I-94 for their records. Form I-94 is the Department of Homeland Security's Arrival & Departure Record issued to aliens admitted to the United States. It's for those who are adjusting status while in the US, or those extending their stay. It shows the terms of admission, including your legal status, the length of time you may stay, and the expected departure date. When I started at the organization, the marketing and communications department started to focus on promoting cultural diversity within its programs and promotional materials as the majority demographic of their business is predominately white. I was asked on multiple occasions to be included in those materials to show that the organization has cultural diversity. Never visiting Colorado before, I saw this as an opportunity that would allow me to fit into my community, but did not realize till years later that I was being used as a token.

It struck me to understand that being in a new community in Colorado, I was sticking out as a visible minority in a new place. That same familiar feeling of culture I had back in Toronto quickly vanished, and I felt alone, as Cecile did when Romulo passed

away. Being isolated in a new country, looking to start a new community but being recognized as the person who would say yes to anything to fit in impacted me in such a profound way that I felt lost and wondered if I belong here. I questioned myself about why I was brought here? Was it for my technical skill or was I brought here for my ethnic background?

Finding my community has always been an ongoing search for me. I have always questioned if I have ever belonged anywhere? "Something is missing" is the repetitive theme that confuses my mental and physical behavior. I do not understand why, in spite of my years of varied experience, I still cannot distinguish the image of where I belong. I continue to ask myself; Where am I? Why am I here? What led me to this place? These are the questions which only I can answer and if I ignore them, my destiny will be ruined and turned into a state of confusion. It's important to remind myself that the opposite of fear is courage and when the opposites meeting counteract, a new destiny is born.

For 6 years I lived and worked in Colorado. I met the love of my life during our first year working there together. After our first year we both decided to stay, and shared an apartment together to build our relationship. She had become a very important chapter in my life as she filled that familiar void, becoming the only family I had known here in the United States. From not knowing anyone in the US, to having her introduce me to her family and them welcoming me, this was the closest experience I'd had to being part of a full family in my lifetime. My young parents worked hard to provide my brother and I a wonderful childhood, but their lack of experience and the late night hours that my father worked resulted in my continuous search for a full family, and of course the sub-culture family of the skateboarding community that I have always sought.

It has been a difficult process, finding my community here in the United States, always knowing that my stay is temporary. What has helped guide this continuous search has been a skateboard and the family that has gratefully accepted me. I get asked often if I am ever going to move back to Canada, or if I'm doing this all backwards, given the politics of the last few years. The reality is that I enjoy this struggle and I'm not ready to go back yet. Similar to Angelito's story, I built the courage to continue my journey here in the United States and have taken plenty of risks to face the consequences I have come across, but I still haven't found what I'm looking for. Time and time again, I come to a point where it's hard to understand why I am out here. I find myself confused and in the middle of nowhere as if I am in the center of the jungle without a tool for survival. I often feel lost within my own world, scared of my own shadow, not hungry for food but for safety.

Aside from skateboarding, my background in Furniture Design & Woodworking is what lured me to the United States. My hard work, dedication and commitment to the institution in Colorado led to my becoming the Director of Furniture Design, Woodworking & Woodturning Programs. This status helped me feel that I was finally welcomed and appreciated for my skill & knowledge rather than for being a visible minority. As I grew in that role, I still stayed close to my sub-culture family, knowing that California is what I always wanted. I received a job opportunity in San Francisco, in a similar role to what I was doing in Colorado. After multiple interviews and signing off on the paperwork, I was offered my chance to get closer to my American Dream. To live in California, stay close to the sub-culture family I always wanted, and continue my passion for woodworking. I had finally made it. But after submitting the paperwork, it was

discovered that my legal status here in the United States deemed me ineligible for the position. The opportunity was taken away from me in a single email. Realizing that this notion of the American dream is not attainable for everyone, that Misled Youth was left heartbroken. The opportunity to live in the place I desired most had vanished in seconds. I felt defeated and my dreams were shattered.

I also felt held by the organization I worked for in Colorado, as though they owned me. Even though I had a work visa, I could not understand the complications of it. If I wanted to go elsewhere, I had to leave the country. This is not a transferable document that can be passed around like currency. During my last year working in Colorado, I was beginning to panic about the next opportunity to continue my journey in the US since my current visa was about to expire. In March of 2020, when the global pandemic began, the organization decided it was best financially to let go of some of their employees. I was one of the five employees to be let go. What the organization did not realize was that when they let me go, my visa instantly expired with a 30 day grace period to leave the United States. Suddenly I was no longer needed in the community that I had worked so hard to find. I was forced out of the US, to go back to Canada.

Over the 7 years I have lived here in the United States, I have gone through 4 different Visas from the same employer, had multiple conversations with immigration lawyers, and I have two envelopes full of the paperwork that proves my status here in the country. It's difficult to understand how powerfully one piece of paper portrays a life, embedded in the black ink, and how it controls you. It's one single sheet of paper that separates me from any US citizen. Once I discovered the limitations of a US visa, I have

had countless nights stressing out about how to continue my journey here in the US, thinking of where and what I can do next.

In Search of New Life

In our last year in Colorado, my partner and I both applied for graduate school at the same time, looking to live a new routine than we were living in Colorado. My new visa did not arrive until the last day of my 30 day grace period to leave the US. I landed in Richmond, Virginia, to enter Virginia Commonwealth University's Craft/Material Studies Program and concentrate in furniture design. My partner went to Brooklyn, New York, to attend Pratt for communications design. We both assumed that living long distance was going to be easy while we worked towards our degrees.

The distance between us was much more difficult than we expected. We slowly grew apart through that first year. After my first semester in graduate school, I was pushed in ways I have never experienced before. I felt I had to start my life over again. I was focusing more on the work I was producing and paying less attention to the relationship that I'd built for 6 years. My new family here in Richmond accepted me and simultaneously I was pushing away the family I already had. My partner and I had a goal of being engaged during school and then getting married after graduate school, but our distance eventually ended our relationship. Instantly I lost the only family I had known here in the United States, and again I remembered Cecile's isolation. Moving to a new city involves a physical move, but the liminal state you are in is very much a mental space. You know exactly where you are, physically and geographically, but you don't

know where you are as a person and you may not know how you fit into this new community.

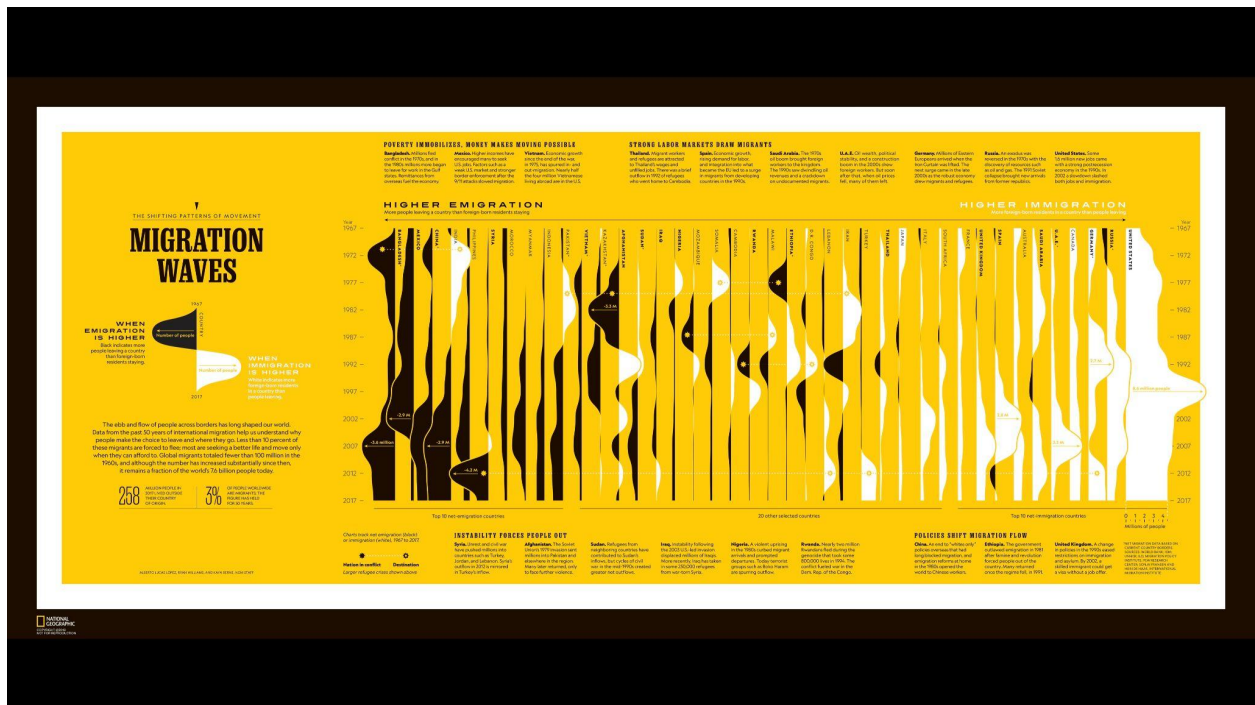
During my second semester of graduate school, I began to reflect more seriously on my lived experiences in migrating to the United States. I considered placement and where I belong. I thought about why my family decided to leave the Philippines. Was it by choice or was it by force? Was it with great success? Or was it with great struggle? I thought about words like “immigrant” and began breaking them down into “I’m” and “migrant,” and wondered how this affects past and present moments? I have lived here in this country over 7 years now, why does it still not feel like home yet?

When Home Won't Let You Stay, a 2019/2020 exhibition at the Institute for Contemporary Art in Boston, MA, that focused on migration, immigration and displacement of people around the world, featured Reena Saini Kallat's “Woven Chronicle.” The piece inspired me to study the movement of people, the patterns of people crossing borders, thinking about race, class, gender, and religion, and the reasons people decide to go wherever they go.



Reena Saini Kallat, Woven Chronicle, 2011-16. Selected work for When Home Won't Let You Stay

These patterns of migration outside of North America brought me to focus on shifting patterns of movement, to consider migration as a transformative force that continues to shape our regions, our nations, and our world. The August 2019 issue of National Geographic, about mass migration deepened my investigations into why it is that people move. Migration is the movement of people and cultures. It's a story of who we are and how we got here over time. People move for multiple reasons, from fleeing war as Cecile and Romulo did to raise their family in Canada, to seeking better education or financial security, as Angelito and Norita did in migrating to Canada. Where in this graph do I pinpoint myself? My family? I was interested in digging deeper in the deconstruction of self and wanted to start with the beginning.



Migration Statistics via National Geographic

My resulting piece, Migration Waves is a projection map of migration patterns from the Philippines and China to the US and Canada. I used reclaimed Douglas Fir, a

material with which I shared the same journey, traveling from Canada to the United States for a purpose. This became the starting point for me to begin working with domestic construction materials. Understanding the value and honesty of what I was making through this material was answering questions I was asking about what brought me to the United States in the first place. Through the use of statistical data that represents migration patterns, my own identification number, and metaphors around borders and access, the piece explores representations of phenomena, displacement, belonging, and defeat, as a response to social and cultural order.



Migration Waves, 2021

Migration Waves raised a series of “why?” questions for me: What is a US visa anyway? Why is it that a single piece of paper with a number on it identifies me in this country? Why is it so difficult to achieve this status? I often think about how I’m just a number in this country and my voice doesn’t count. I will never know who the number of

the person is before me, or after me. The country they came from and what for. What was their migration story? Our identities are hidden. Artists/archivists Mariam Ghani and Chitra Ganesh created a work called the “Index of the Disappeared” in 2004, which is an ongoing physical archive of post 9/11 disappearances. This work inspired me to make a card catalogue containing a collection of my current and former personal “visitor information,” my entries and exits into the United States as a migrant, through Form I-94. For migrants, Form I-94 represents being tracked and recorded in the United States. In response, my piece Index of the Unknown was installed in a small room to parallel the emotional experience of living in the United States after losing the only family I had.

Travel History Results

Document Number: [REDACTED]
Document Country of Issuance: **Canada**

	Date	Type	Location
1	2020-07-13	Arrival	TOR
2	2020-06-18	Departure	CLT
3	2019-12-27	Arrival	TOR
4	2019-12-19	Departure	HOU
5	2019-09-24	Arrival	VCV
6	2019-09-20	Departure	SLC
7	2019-05-14	Arrival	TOR
8	2019-05-08	Departure	DEN
9	2018-12-31	Arrival	TOR
10	2018-12-24	Departure	CHI

For Your Info

This travel history may not reflect: land border arrivals/departures, closed loop cruise arrivals/departures, air carrier reservation updates, and USCIS updates, changes of status, extensions of stay or adjustments of status. U.S. Citizen and Lawful Permanent Resident travel is NOT provided on this website.

If this travel history is not complete, there is no action to take.

CBP documents travel from a variety of sources.

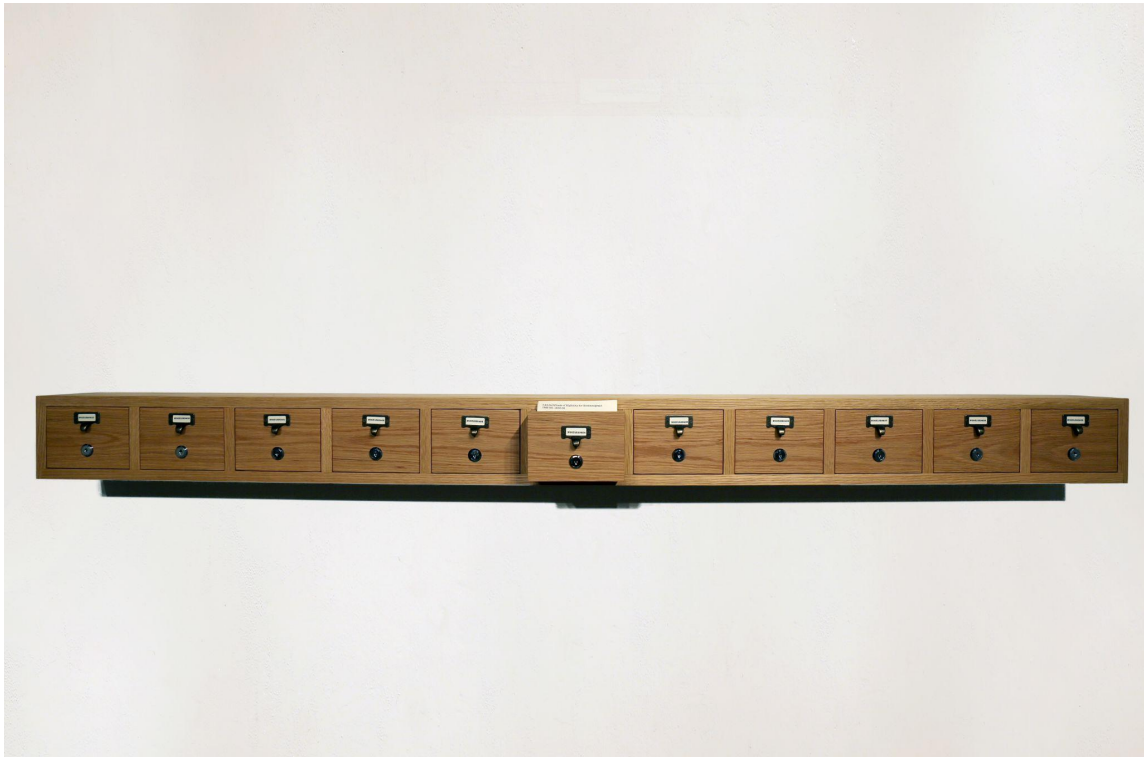
This travel history is only a tool to assist the public and is not an official record for legal purposes.

For security, close your browser after retrieving your I-94 number.

Personal Form I-94, Department of Homeland Security Website



Miriam Ghani & Chitra Ganesh, Index of the Disappeared, 2004-cont.



Index of the Unknown, 2021

In contemplation of the US as my home, I mused about The Liberty Bell as an iconic symbol of American freedom; its tolls loudly announced the Declaration of Independence. To many, this bell represents the declaration of false freedom, liberty, and unity. This resulting piece, Labor of Liberty, is a manual punch clock that resembles the Liberty Bell. It was built using 2x4's, a material of domestic construction, to re-create the sense of industry and the migrant labor workforce who are relocating for opportunity. I used my personal data from Form I-94, still exploring the feelings of being tracked and recorded in the United States. This is a status document, which defines the traveler's visa status once inside the United States, and the length of stay permitted. Once a traveler is admitted, dates on the visa do not define how long the traveler is allowed to stay, the I-94 is the controlling document. I translated the information into time cards of my arrival and departure dates since 2011. A Migrant worker is a person who migrates within a home country to pursue work. Migrant workers usually do not have the intention to stay permanently in the country or region in which they work. Time is precious and for every migrant, time expires. Labor is what brought me to the United States, and labor is what allows me to stay.



Labor of Liberty, 2021-Cont.

Labor of Liberty has been installed on the wall of my studio space since November 2021. During the quiet hours, the sounds of the gears and motors moving every second and the one minute mark clunk of the clock were amplified. The sound reminds me that a manual punch clock is an antiquated object and is not commonly used in the workplace anymore. In exploring other objects that could bring nostalgic feelings of the experiences of Cecile, Romulo, Angelito and Norita, I discovered a Solari Board, also known as a split flap display board. A Split Flap Display Board is an electromechanical display device that presents changeable alphanumeric texts as a wayfinder in transit hubs. When the information on the board changes, the wheels rotate until the proper flap is displayed, and with each flip the board makes a particular sound which becomes memorable to viewers, to notify that information has changed. The sound represents the anticipation of travel, the same anticipation I felt when I was getting closer to achieving my American dream.

Complicated messages are hard to convey through a sign when people are busy, stressed, or confronted with a new environment, as people tend to be when passing through a transit hub. The display provides an intuitive understanding of illusion and disillusion of arrival and departure destinations. The emotional excitement of the board evokes anticipation, possibility, and reassurance that soon, a train or plane will take you away, going somewhere. Reflecting back on that time sitting at the airport waiting for the Department of Homeland Security to grant me access into the United States and my journey thus far, I looked back at the recorded time on my I-94. I took the data and programmed every entry and exit in the United States onto a small computer to drive a series of circuit boards and motors to display lines of text over and over again. This allowed me to trace back the moments of border crossings and the transit hubs I had to wait in to get me to my final destination. I was able to see my life as a continuous scroll of text.



Unordinary Itinerary (detail), 2022

In the Art Education seminar class “Cultural Diversity in Art & Society,” focused on education in biennials of the global south, one of the topics of discussion was Art Education after Apartheid. A magazine was brought to the classroom called the Chimurenga, which translates to “struggle for freedom.” The Chronicle edition was a one-time only print of the magazine that takes the form of a newspaper, a future forward document that travels back in time to re-imagine the present. I was fascinated by this use of a popular medium to raise the questions of news and newness, of how we define both the now and history, as the means to best engage the present. The newspaper is a unique medium both for its disposability and its longevity, its ability to fashion routine in a way that allows us to traverse, challenge and negotiate liminality in everyday life.



Chimurenga 16 - The Chimurenga Chronicle, October 2011

In discussing the changes in the direction of my work this year with my family, I discovered that my Lolo, Angelito, wrote a book called, “In Search of New Life.” It was about his dreams to migrate and journey from the Philippines to Canada. Similar to the piece, Index of the Unknown, I was thinking again about migration stories from others. After being exposed to Chimurenga 16, The Chimurenga Chronicle, I reached out to all of my family members who agreed to participate in this project and printed an 8 page broadsheet newspaper that is a collection of my family's stories in search of a new life. By imagining the newspaper as a low-tech time travel machine, my intention was not only to reanimate history and ask what could have been, but also to provide a space from which to re-engage the present and re-dream the future.



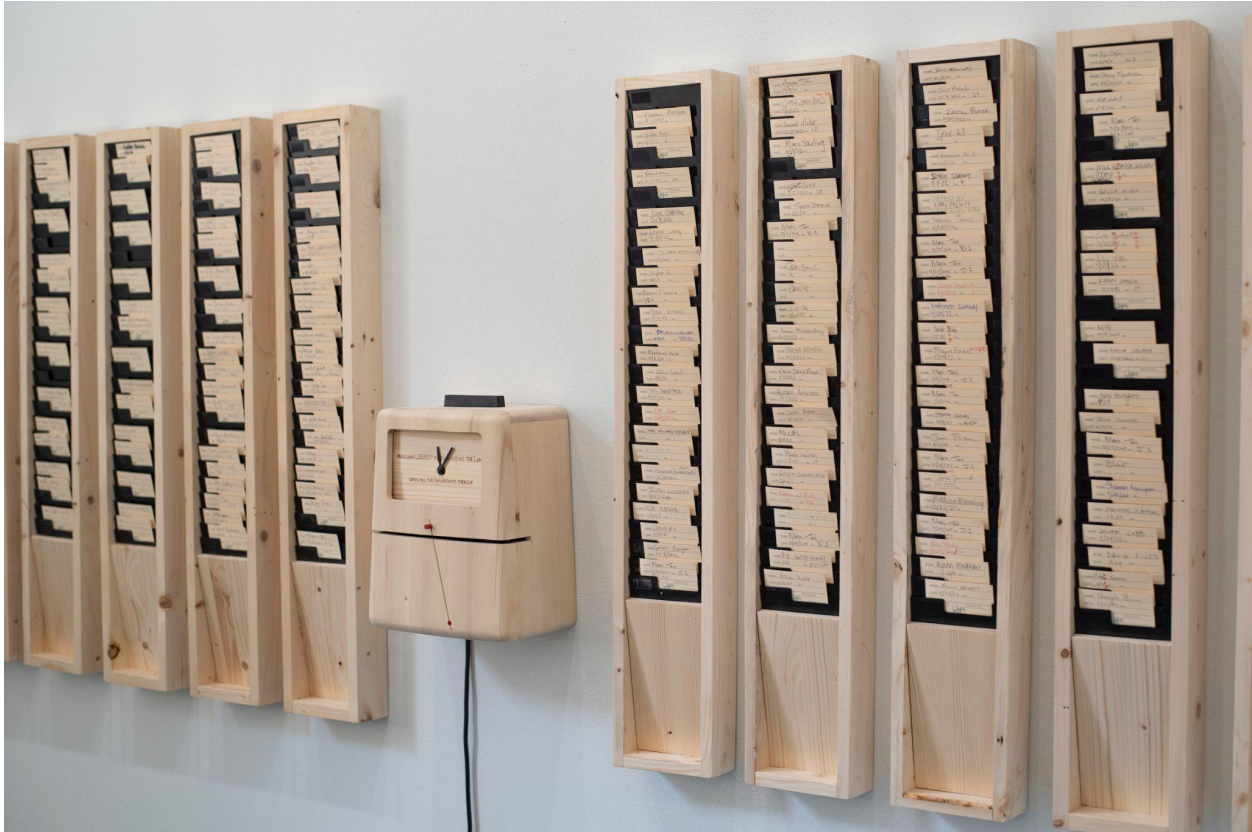
In Search of New Life, 2022

My formal undergraduate training at Sheridan College was based in learning the language of designing and making, but I was never challenged there with the questions of why. The content that I have been exposed to during graduate school has changed my methods of thinking and has allowed me to insert my true self into objects. Gaining a deeper understanding of what I am making has pushed me out of my comfort zone and has begun to answer the questions I have been asking. Function continues to be an important aspect to my practice but is now performing in a very different way than it was in my previous furniture work. Seeing my US journey transformed into objects has made me become fearful of what I have accomplished. I am re-defining the archive to allow my viewers to gain insights into the life I have lived.

When I decided to apply to graduate school, I remembered the question my dad asked me while I was watching *Misled Youth*, “are you sure you want to get into this?” Or was I the *Misled Youth* who thought chasing the American dream was easy? Here I am now, providing a glimpse into what constantly loops through my mind, a continuous clunk of a time recorder that reminds me that my time here will always expire. The perpetual motion of lived experiences entering the United States and the hurdles those lives have come across displayed on a solari board, and a newspaper that shares the stories of my family's journey and my starting point to continue my family's lineage in search for that new life.



Overview shot of “Object as Atlas”, 2022



Labor of Liberty, 2022

If you cannot pinpoint your exact identity, how can you possibly pinpoint your goal or your destiny? It requires understanding to be able to know yourself, your dreams, desires and aspirations, before you can begin to move on to the path of your growth. Understanding your personal needs is an opportunity to develop your hidden talents and natural skills. It is human nature to find an alternative, an easier way to get past any detour to a destination. In this case, your destination is your livelihood, your feelings, your thinking, and your environment. And your detour is confusing because you do not have an effective method to know what livelihood you want to be in, what feelings you want to be with and what kind of life you want to live.

When you change, you aspire to something. When there is aspiration, there is an intensity or an urge for you to move into the quality of life you dream about. When you are bored, you are killing your interests and dreams in life, you are killing your imaginations and feelings, you are killing the longevity of your happiness and freedom. Do something which will keep your emotions younger, praise your heart with love and acceptance, and put a smile on your face or laugh your way out from worries or frustrations. Do something which will keep your mind busy. Your mind will never get older and in fact it will become wiser as the time changes. I'm in my 30's and people continue to ask me why I still skateboard. Simply because it gives me freedom, liberty, unity, and community.

Liminality is chaotic, the space is filled with tension. When a person enters a liminal space, their old value system is destroyed, causing one to be disoriented. We need a new value system to live by, and the experimentation that we undertake to discover that value system is always uncomfortable and full of failure. The new/old question, again, is where to go next. Liminality is chaotic, the space is filled with tension. Life is waiting. Not just waiting in line at the grocery store or waiting for the operator to connect you to someone on another line, but waiting to love and commit and find the work you were meant to do. Our lives are full of inconvenient setbacks, not due to some great mistake but because of a purpose we don't comprehend. It's in the waiting that we become.

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Chakraborty, Arup Ratan, Liminality in Post-Colonial Theory: A Journey from Arnold van Gennep to Homi K. Bhabha, Accessed March 20th, 2022.

A World on the Move, National Geographic, August 2019 Issue.

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Goins, Jeff, The In-Between, Moody Publishers, Chicago, August 1, 2013

Influential Works:

Reena Saini Kallat, Woven Chronicle, 2011-16.

Miriam Ghani & Chitra Ganesh, Index of the Disappeared, 2004-cont.

Chimurenga 16, The Chimurenga Chronicle, October 2011.

Interviews With:

Norita Cantillas, Cecile del Rosario-Tan, Arlene Tan, Lisa Urhaney, Caitlin Traynor, Pat Traynor, Angelane Traynor, Margaret Cantillas, Angel Cantillas, Michael Tan, Angelica Tan, Bronte Foster-Tan, Grace Cherry, Timothy Tan, Lucky Laureano.

Vita

EDUCATION

- 2022 MFA Craft/Material Studies - Furniture, Virginia Commonwealth University,
Richmond, VA
- 2010 Advanced Diploma, Craft & Design - Furniture, Sheridan College, Oakville, ON

SOLO/DUO EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 Man(you)factured, The Cardinal Sins, Richmond, VA
Object as Atlas, The Anderson, Richmond, VA
On the Level, Hawthorne Gallery, Richmond, VA
- 2021 Displaced, The Anderson, Richmond, VA

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 Materials: Hard + Soft, Patterson-Appleton Arts Center, Denton, TX
Home as Self, Wharton Esherick Museum, Malvern, PA
Making Matters: Fresh Perspectives in Fine Craft, Sally D. Francisco Gallery,
Layton, NJ
The Places We Dwell: Collection 2, Online Exhibition, Co-Ex Art,
Cambridge, ON
Small Acts: The Craft of Subversion, City College Art Gallery, San Diego, CA
Craft Biennial Exhibition, Fuller Craft Museum, Brockton, MA
- 2021 COHORTS - alone : together, MFA Exhibition Online, University of Montana
Utah Design Exhibit, Clubhouse, Salt Lake City, UT
The Cardinal Club, The Anderson, Richmond, VA
- 2020 Utah Design Exhibit, Clubhouse, Salt Lake City, UT (postponed)
Did You See What I Sawed?, Hawthorne Gallery, Richmond, VA
- 2019 Public Activation with Anderson Ranch, Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, CO
Pairs, Patton-Malott Gallery, Snowmass Village, CO
Bauhaus Seen, R2 Gallery, Carbondale, CO
Uncoordinated, Patton-Malott Gallery, Snowmass Village, CO
- 2018 Sticks & Stoneware, Carbondale Clay Center, Carbondale, CO
- 2017 Mise en Place, Patton-Mallott Gallery, Snowmass Village, CO
- 2016 Intern Show, Anderson Ranch Arts Center, Snowmass Village, CO
- 2015 Welcome, Anderson Ranch Arts Center, Snowmass Village, CO
Objectified, Queen Elizabeth Park Community & Cultural Centre, Oakville, ON
- 2014 Intern Show, Anderson Ranch Arts Center, Snowmass Village, CO
- 2013 Evening of the Arts, B Town Sound, Burlington, ON

- 2010 PDA for Edmund Place, DeLeon White Gallery, Toronto, ON
In Hand, Whippersnapper Gallery, Toronto, ON
- 2008 - 2010 Sheridan College Craft & Design Gallery, Oakville, ON

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- 2022 Get Bent, Peters Valley School of Crafts, Layton, NJ
Object as Atlas, Anderson Ranch Arts Center, Snowmass Village, CO
Advanced Woodworking & Furniture Design, Teaching Assistant to Scott Braun,
Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
- 2021 Advanced Woodworking & Furniture Design, Teaching Assistant to Scott Braun,
Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
Woodworking Techniques, Adjunct Instructor, Virginia Commonwealth University,
Richmond, VA
Furniture Design, Teaching Assistant to Vivian Chiu, Virginia Commonwealth
University, Richmond, VA
- 2020 Woodworking Techniques, Teaching Assistant to Scott Braun,
Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
Woodworking Techniques, Teaching Assistant to Vivian Chiu,
Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
Fairly Fine Woodworking, Anderson Ranch Arts Center, Snowmass Village, CO
(postponed)
Studio Concentration, Anderson Ranch Arts Center, Snowmass Village, CO
- 2019 Fundamentals in Woodturning, Anderson Ranch Arts Center,
Snowmass Village, CO
Riding the Concrete Wave: pinstriped skateboards, Anderson Ranch Arts Center,
Snowmass Village, CO
Studio Concentration, Anderson Ranch Arts Center, Snowmass Village, CO
- 2018 Woodworking for the Kitchen, Anderson Ranch Arts Center,
Snowmass Village, CO
Strategies in Woodworking: tools & techniques, Anderson Ranch Arts Center,
Snowmass Village, CO
Studio Concentration, Anderson Ranch Arts Center, Snowmass Village, CO
- 2017 3D Printing for Teens, Anderson Ranch Arts Center, Snowmass Village, CO
- 2015 Weekend Warrior Workshops, Queen Elizabeth Park Community & Cultural
Centre, Oakville, ON

AWARDS/GRANTS/RESIDENCIES

- 2022 Graduate Travel Grant, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
Graduate Travel Grant, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
Appalachian Visions Scholarship, Arrowmont School of Crafts, Gatlinberg, TN

- 2021 Pentaculum Residency, Arrowmont School of Crafts, Gatlinberg, TN
 Graduate Research Grant, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
 Graduate Travel Grant, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
 Graduate Travel Grant, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
 Graduate Teaching Assistantship, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
- 2020 Pentaculum Residency, Arrowmont School of Crafts, Gatlinberg, TN (Postponed)
 Alice Cabell Horsley Parker Scholarship in Craft/Material Studies, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
 Artist Relief Grant, United States Artists Organization, Chicago, IL
 Graduate Teaching Assistantship, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA

PROFESSIONAL WORK/DEVELOPMENT/PUBLIC SPEAKING

- 2022 Artist Presentation, Institute for Contemporary Art, Richmond, VA
- 2021 Lets Talk About Grad School, The Furniture Society Student Affinity Group, via Zoom
- 2020 Artist Presentation, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
 Furniture Society Conference: Building Place, Shaping Identity, Creating Community, Asheville, NC (Postponed)
- 2014 - 2020 Artist Presentation, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
 Studio Coordinator, Furniture Design & Woodworking/Digital Fabrication Technician, Anderson Ranch Arts Center, Snowmass Village, CO
 Scholarship Selection Committee, Anderson Ranch Arts Center, Snowmass Village, CO
 Artist in Residence Selection Committee, Anderson Ranch Arts Center, Snowmass Village, CO
- 2019 Faculty Lecture, Anderson Ranch Arts Center, Snowmass Village, CO
 Furniture Society Conference: Ground Work, Milwaukee, WI
- 2018 Faculty Lecture, Anderson Ranch Arts Center, Snowmass Village, CO
 Furniture Society Conference: Nexus, San Francisco, CA
- 2017 Faculty Lecture, Anderson Ranch Arts Center, Snowmass Village, CO
- 2014 Woodshop Technician, Queen Elizabeth Park Community & Cultural Centre, Oakville, ON

PUBLICATIONS

- 2020 This is Woodworking Blog, mekwoodworks.com
- 2017 - 2019 The Aspen Times
- 2019 Aspen Daily News
 Arts District, PBS Denver
- 2010 Design Lines Magazine, Toronto, ON