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Station Museum Examines Asian American Identity in Latest Exhibition



By Paul Middendorf

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An impressive exhibition has mounted and will soon come down at the Station Museum, bringing forth the ever abrasive journey of a culture struggling to be part of a country. *In(di)visible*, the museum's latest show, tackles the daily issues of discrimination, immigration and radicalized social hierarchy among Asian Americans. The exhibition presents a series of artists and powerful works representing the painful visual disconnects Asian Americans experience through their depictions in Hollywood and the mass media, highlighting their constant struggle for accurate representation. The challenging plight Asian Americans have overcome within American history is rarely focused outside the context of comedy or one-sided caucasian views within the US timeline.

“In a country where it is imperative to perform integration and to present as assimilated for the sake of survival, the myth of the



attending the right schools, marrying the right person, having the right body and living the right lifestyle, is the same system where segregated neighborhoods become exotic destinations to eat strange things and practice primitive customs for health and profit. Attainment without belonging”.



Hung Liu, from the series: “Branches”, installation view Station Museum of Contemporary Art, 2018.

The Station Museum, under the direction of Jim Harithas, has never failed to present intense and educational exhibitions, often bringing to the foreground topics most major institutions would shy away from. *In(di)visible* is a yet another nudge to half sleeping Americans that there is an ongoing battle for equality and that discrimination is not just a keyword from our past — it’s here right now. *In(di)visible* brings forth somber and heavy topics and assembles them into poetic form through the bold works of artists Mel Chin, Pao Houa Her, Kenneth Tin-Kin Hung, Miao



When you enter into the museum you are promptly faced by the building's bright red walls and an installation by artist Hung Liu. Liu is known for paintings based on historical Chinese photographs. Making suggestions to the passage of memory into history, Liu works to uncover personal narratives captured in a moment. The three large works, titled "Branches (Wong Family 1,2, & 3)," depict regal and posed family members while inserting a moment of candidness. The incredibly mastered large-scale drawings contain just the amount of information needed to encapsulate the families. The drawings are stately, resembling government-commissioned photographs. Below the paintings lies an enormous pile of fortune cookies. The non-native cookies make note of American cultural appropriation and lend the room with a faint sweet smell. With the drawings at half completion, it leads the viewer to take a surface look into the families and representation at a glance, or lack there of, into the lives of those represented.



Mel Chin, "Fan Club (Unfolding Version)", 1994, Paper, ash, ink on paper, blood on silk.



the death of Vincent Chin. The story tells of a man killed in cold blood due to persecution and mistaken identity based on stereotypes. It's an all too familiar story of two men serving no time for taking a life based on hate and self proclaimed justifications. A delicate silk fan is spread out containing a dark circle of blood staining the fabric and representing another national insignia. Closed, the work merely represents a baseball bat, a quintessential American symbol. The delicate work is impactful and a monument of tranquility for a deafening and often repeated topic.

Across the gallery, Lien Truong re-interprets the work of Thomas Cole, the founder of the Hudson River School. In Coles original series, "The Course of Empire," the promise of Manifest Destiny is visualized through works on canvas. Truong's "Mutiny in the Garden" series examines these similar themes with a painted reimagining of a contemporary American landscape implanted within. The flamboyant and colorful pieces serve as a reminder of American history through the brutal manifest destiny of a country formed by colonization and its treatment of immigrants and slaves. Rejecting the recognizable Hudson River painters, known for reminiscent colonial British and French landscapes, the works are a frenetic amalgamation of western and Asian painting techniques and philosophies. Truong disguises the topics ever so slightly while diving deep into cultural methods and textiles to design acts, periods and conflicts throughout history. Throughout the exhibition the videos and performance remnants lead you as the viewer through a breathtaking migration. From the soothing yet visually sharp imagery of Hông-Ân Truong's video installation "Wheel in the Sky" to the caustic



and political decline through social media. The latest exhibition leaves very few stones unturned, and it's delivered with a delicate yet firm curatorial hand.



Judy Shintani, "Deconstructed Kimonos", 2012, altered vintage kimonos, ceramic, wooden altars.

In(di)visible was accompanied by a series of discussions and performances throughout its exhibition run, including "Next Performance 2018" by Miao Jia Xin. The well-attended performance questioned the assumptions about power in relation to identity politics and left behind the artifacts and relics of the performance. Move to Amend National Outreach Director Greg Coleridge led a talk and group discussion on corporate influence on government. Coleridge presented the group with a constructive way to bring democracy back to the people, delivering the powers and rights of the Constitution back to individuals and away from large corporations. ***In(di)visible*** was



climate.

The Station Museum remains an important pillar of our arts institutions. *In(di)visible* closes April 22. Do yourself a favor and check this one out.

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