



Afternoon Projects is pleased to present *Object of Affection*, a debut solo exhibition by the artist Hau Pham.

How does one contend with carrying the weight of what it means to be an Asian woman at a time where anti-Asian hate is hypervisible?

How are we supposed to move through the world when this hate is deeply intertwined with misogyny (Dewan, 2021; Wang, 2021)?

We are continuously met with headlines in which Asian women are harmed or killed. Another Asian woman was pushed into the subway. Another Asian woman was struck with a bat. Another Asian woman was followed and killed in her own home.

Another. Another. Another.

We are told that we are nothing but disposable, packaged, objects.

We are seen but not *really* seen. Only seen in a way that's suitable and desirable, becoming the Other.

How will *others* truly ever see us? Or as Anne Anlin Cheng questions, "How do we take seriously the life of a subject who lives as an object...?"

In *Object of Affection*, artist Hau Pham shares her own confusion, guilt, and frustration of relating to the object, being perceived as the object, and desiring the object. Her works in a sense, become extensions of her body and document the nuances of being an Asian woman and more specifically, a Vietnamese woman. For instance, in *Vietnamese Woman Figurine With Her Hat Broken Off*, she challenges both gendered and cultural expectations and the desire to be perceived as flawless.

Throughout the artist's debut solo exhibition, Pham confronts the historical principles of Orientalism in which Asia and the Asiatic character are always "ancient, excessive, feminine, available and decadent" (Cheng, 425). At the same time, Pham explores how these notions still exist today as Asian women continue to be hyper-sexualized and fetishized through popular media and how this influences her own perception of herself.

She addresses how sudden self-perceptions can change where brief moments of empowerment can quickly shift to confusion. Her portrait, *Satisfaction (for a fleeting moment)*, based on a photograph, preserves a moment of self-confidence. Yet through the process, Pham continuously gazes back at herself. The longer she looks, the more challenging it becomes to understand her sense of self.



In the installation of *Step on Me*, Pham's portrait is printed on a door mat, and she becomes what society has told her she must be: docile, passive, bought, and owned. Here, she is transformed into a literal object. The mat invites the viewer to make a choice: to step on her or not. To consume her or not.

*Object of Affection* challenges viewers to reconsider the ways in which they choose to see Pham.

Or not.

- Julia Huỳnh

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Julia Huỳnh (she/her) is an interdisciplinary artist & community archivist. She is also a co-facilitator of the *Empowering Phụ Nữ Photovoice Project* - a pilot project engaging Vietnamese women youth in photography and storytelling.

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### Community Resources

Healing in Colour- an online directory of BIPOC therapists <https://www.healingincolour.com/>

Project 1907- an online reporting tool to track anti-Asian racism, hate, and violence experienced in Canada <https://www.project1907.org/reportingcentre>

### References

Cheng, Anne Anlin. 2018. "Ornamentalism: A Feminist Theory for the Yellow Woman." *Critical Inquiry* 44 (3):415-446.

Dewan, Shalia. 2021. "How Racism and Sexism Intertwine to Torment Asian-American Women." *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/18/us/racism-sexism-atlanta-spa-shooting.html>

Wang, Marina. 2021. "Anti-Asian racism and misogyny: It's time to call it out." *CBC*. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/road-ahead-first-person-anti-asian-hate-crimes-1.5968785>