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Project Objectives

1. Reframe legacy of Afong Moy, who migrated to the U.S. during the mid-1800s to current experiences within Chinese diaspora in United States.
2. Develop new body of work that reference historical Chinese objects that reclaim and recontextualize Western mimicry of Asian objects to produce new forms of work that counteract the conflation and oversimplification of Asian cultures.
3. The goal of the work is to further engage with new ways of understanding current issues within the Asian American community from an interdisciplinary and new media approach.
4. Document, exhibit and publish work.

Background

The intent of this project is to recontextualize the issues Afong Moy faced in the United States within contemporary culture and current Chinese diaspora. Advertised as “The Chinese Lady,” Afong Moy was paraded across the U.S as a living exhibition amongst “curiosities” or coveted goods between 1834-1850. Through material explorations and new media approach, I connect familial ancestral traditions passed down by maternal lineage to reinterpretations of objects found within Afong Moy’s performances. By restaging a ritual performed by my mother to cleanse a new home, the tradition is, then, transmuted into a ritual of filial piety. I reimagine historical and contemporary beauty standards, both Confucius ideas of hair as a gift from one’s parents and the notion of body hair within Western culture to reconcile with the impossibility of meeting such standards. In one of my animated loops, the incense depletes as hair grows from the carrot. In another, hair acts as a prop. Through the utilization of key references throughout the work, such as plastic kid stools (ones my parents use for domestic tasks) and the transformation of a carrot into an incense holder, I point to the resourcefulness throughout the history of Chinese migration into the U.S. Within the portals created by my glass displays, I obscure my self portraits through refractive and textured surfaces of glass, the haze of smoke, and the jittery loops of my videos. The work, thus, provides an alternate world that, even as it invites viewers in through glimmers, seepages, and shimmering light, it gives control over to the depiction of ones’ image and reinserts agency in places often not found.



Jamie Ho, detail installation images of *Rituals for Filial Piety* at Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, Omaha, NE, August 2025

Methods

By breaking down each step of the referenced tradition, I first reimagined my mother’s ritual through a series of continuous images that were then transformed into a looped stop motion animation. The animations or animated loops also provided space to recontextualize and contradict western beauty standards by staging lilies (or as advertised in grocery stores “Oriental Lilies”) and carrot top leaves with restrictive pantyhose and cheap artificial nails. To critique the Western consumerism of Asiatic objects, I worked with both handmade and ready-made objects within the sculptures. To create the porcelain incense holders with synthetic hair, I first made plaster mold of a carrot from a major grocery store and poured porcelain slip into the mold. Once set, I then used cobalt oxide wash to reference blue and white china. The glass displays are created from carrot leaf clay relief that is pressed into hot glass. The porcelain and the glass are then housed instead a plastic stool structure that reference Chinese vase stands. By combining image and sculpture, I demonstrate complexities of Chinese diasporic experience.

Jamie Ho, *Rituals for Filial Piety*, installation with projected animated loops (above) and during the day (below) at Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, Omaha, NE, August 2025

Repurposed plastic stools, slip-casted porcelain, glass, incense, synthetic hair, tassels, animated loops at night



Outcomes

The funding from this grant supported the work created at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts Residency in Omaha, NE and I showed an iteration of the work at the Open House / Open Studios event on July 26, 2025. This opportunity allowed me to create documentation that I then submitted to variety of exhibitions and conferences.

Next Steps

This project will be continued at the Visual Studies Workshop Project Space Residency where I was awarded \$1,000 to continue my research in October 23-November 20, 2025.

The project will then be exhibited in a solo exhibition at Art League Houston in Houston, Texas between January 16-April 19, 2026. The exhibition will occur during FotoFest Biennial 2026 and Art League Houston has applied to be a participating venue. FotoFest Biennial is in it’s 40th year as a photography festival and will bring a national audience to this project.

I will also intend to apply for additional grants and publications with this work.



Jamie Ho, *untitled (posing with lilies)* (L) and *untitled (domestic task)* (R), stills from animated loops, 2025.