



Charlotte Street Foundation Fellows • 2020

glyneisha  
Cory Imig  
Kathy Liao

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**Nerman Museum** of Contemporary Art • Johnson County Community College

## Interview with the Charlotte Street Foundation Fellows - 2020

By Karen Gerety Folk

*Kathy and glyneisha, when you received the award in 2020, what were you initially planning for your exhibition?*

**Kathy Liao:** Initially when I was thinking about the exhibit, I had started on a painting that was a crowded airport scene, crowds at LAX, remembering my grandma and I arriving at the airport, greeted by family members already here in the United States... if you look really carefully you can probably notice a few more figures in there, but it's mostly obscured by this image on the surface. And it is an image of my grandma... my mom and my grandma live in Taiwan. So, a lot of our connection in the last year and a half is through FaceTime... that image specifically was a snapshot of my grandma in a subway station in Taiwan. So, it's just this really interesting collapse, like this crowd scene to this really empty, very solo or solitude type of image.

**glyneisha:** This space was really a response, talking about the pandemic and everyone's experience. I feel like this show was also a response to my experiences during that "hermit" and alone time with myself... I knew I wanted this space to be green, that's something that I knew from just thinking about ideas in 2020... then I added the wall addition, because I knew I wanted to separate this space and have it feel like two spaces... something that I've been thinking about a lot is altar spaces within my installation work, especially within gallery and museum settings, and so dividing that room just presented the opportunity of having these two altars that spoke to one another.

*Cory, what does it mean to you to have your artwork visible when people are approaching the museum building?*

**Cory Imig:** The architecture of the space definitely stands out, especially the huge windows and tall ceilings in the atrium. Also, I've always really liked the staircase and what it does to the space. I wanted the stairway to become part of the work because it does something so interesting architecturally to the



Kathy Liao, *In Between the Lines*, 2019, Collage, charcoal, gesso, litho crayon, and pencil on paper, 115 x 168", Courtesy the Artist, Photo: EG Schempf

space. The whole campus is built on a grid, and then you get to the museum and that stairway is where part of the building jets off at this odd angle.

*How do you feel about your ribbon work Linear Spaces (blue) serving as a portal?*

**Cory Imig:** I've never installed the work in this way before where passing through it is not optional. Technically, viewers could go up the stairs and go around the work to enter the galleries but most viewers will walk through the piece. In the past, when I have installed work similar to this, interaction has been voluntary. This time you pretty much have to interact with it.

*glyneisha, how important are the walls when it comes to physical and temporal boundaries in your work?*

**glyneisha:** For the plant shadows that's definitely a matter of scale, but also a gesture of taking over this space. I really like to command the space as mine, and my people's, and so I take those shadows, up to the wall and have a moment of forcing the viewer to raise and lift their head and look in the shadows, in the cracks, in the edges. I think that's also about being seen.

*Kathy, the large scale of the figures in your work might make visitors feel like they are participants. How do you feel about these imagined relationships?*

**Kathy Liao:** Part of my hope is like, standing

in front of these pieces, it does feel enveloping, right? Like I feel you're kind of absorbed into the space like you're part of the space, especially in relevance to the *In Between the Lines* piece and also the *Liu Nian* piece. I want you to feel that you're existing in part of that space. I do feel like that piece *Without* with my grandma, my mom, my father... that is probably the most intimate piece of the three. It's like an interior space, even though it is monumental size, but it is an intimate space, and in many of my pieces I think about relationships of myself to my family.

*Cory and glyneisha, what conversation do you imagine your works having together?*

**Cory Imig:** They're all separate pieces, but I wanted them to operate as one environment or one space. I'm also really interested in the blurriness between what the work is and what the space is. Oftentimes, my installations are pointing at things in spaces that are not necessarily supposed to be noticed. For example, with this work *Linear Spaces (blue)*, the points where they attach are not at the normal hanging height, which draws the viewer's eye to parts of the space that are often overlooked.

**glyneisha:** For me, home is through color and through these very specific objects, some of the objects in the jars were family artifacts. The masks were masks that I grew up seeing in my mom's home. And so that sense of safety and belonging is something that fuels the show, from the very beginning.

## (With)drawn: Thick and Thin as the Spaces Between

By Sylvie Fortin

In January 2020, I traveled to Kansas City to serve as one of four panelists for the Charlotte Street Fellowship. During our visit, we had the privilege of meeting many artists in their studios where we saw and discussed their work. Little did any of us know, or sense, how radically our lives were about to change.

It now seems like a lifetime away, or rather, a fuzzy memory... a parallel universe where togetherness, rather than distancing, meant safety. The invitation to write this short text, now, for the Charlotte Street Foundation Fellows • 2020 exhibition has allowed me to reconsider the work of Cory Imig, glyneisha and Kathy Liao. By focusing on the ways in which these three artists explore the valences of space, unexpected connections came into view.

Three recent works by Cory Imig gently greet visitors in the museum's vast glass-enclosed lobby, drawing attention to several dimensions of the space, including its volume, materiality and the behaviors it assigns visitors—its ideology. *Volumetric Form VI* (2019), a simple, asymmetrical welded steel structure takes up the lobby's vaunted connection to time and nature. Equal parts performative sculpture, space drawing and shadow play, the work unsettles boundaries by dissolving the differences between the concepts of through and around. This is as subtle as it is radical: politics is a spatial practice. Whereas Latin has bequeathed us "wisdoms" such as *tempus fugit* and *genius loci*—asserting that time flies and that places have spirits—Imig's work offers up the experience of fugitivity, reminding us that the spirit of place, and of life for that matter, is movement. With its dancing lines, *Volumetric Form VI* refuses settlement—and its deathly and extractivist colonial/capitalist foundation. This precious lesson drawn in space reminds us that, regardless of the centrality of property to Western thought, space can never be acquired, owned, and contained—it is always produced, and it escapes.

In her two other works, Imig puts common materials, practices and

gestures to uncommon uses, making space rather than taking it. A small triangle of yellow carpet—floor drawing? Sculpture? Spatial intervention?—alters our usual reading of the space, raising questions about how we perceive and what we fail to. As an image, it evokes reflection—a yellow sliver of light bouncing between surfaces; as material, it evokes absorption and insulation. In *Linear Spaces (blue)* (2019), shimmering blue ribbons shower from a ratchet strap tensed diagonally across the space. *Linear Spaces (blue)* mobilizes color to simultaneously bisect and unite space, rendering it visible, material and fluid in a move that is equal parts drawing, spatial intervention and delegated performance. Invoking play and adornment, *Linear Spaces (blue)* invites us to walk through it, to put our bodies on/through the line, to have skin in the game, to experience what it feels like to walk (and be seen walking) through a ribbon shower. In the process, the work invites us to tune into the thickness of any space, to attune ourselves to its infinite potential. It also yields consciousness of the performances which the lobby, with its specific institutional function, assigns to every one of us, albeit differently—an intricate choreography of inclusion and exclusion, a precise cast of allowed and disallowed bodies, attitudes and behaviors—and invites us to chart the ways we may act otherwise.

glyneisha's new installation *Pack Li.gh.te* explores the gendered and racialized power of space, starting from the radiating experience of the Black matrilinear interior. Presented upstairs in the media gallery, the installation combines graphite paintings, mixed-media collages on paper and canvas, two protection altars of neatly displayed objects in glass jars, spell jars, oils, and medicinal herbs and plants, and a soundscape. Simultaneously referential and experiential, the multisensory work seeks to create a safe space, a space of healing, identification, affirmation and celebration, especially for Black visitors, who may not feel welcome in museums.

References to generations of Black feminists sustain the matrilinear



(Left to right) glyneisha, *Untitled*, 2021, Mixed media collage and assemblage on paper, 46.5 x 36.5 x 2"; glyneisha, *Fool of Me*, 2021, Graphite on oil ground on canvas, 48 x 60 x 1.375"; glyneisha, *Measuring the Distance Between Us*, 2018, Graphite on gesso on canvas, 48 x 60 x 1.375". All works courtesy the Artist. Photo: EG Schempf

energies of *Pack Li.gh.te*: the installation pays homage to the many Black women whose words, ideas and attitudes have provided guidance to the artist. This pantheon includes family members, visual artist Alison Saar, characters from "classic" Black films such as Mother Sister in Spike Lee's "Do the Right Thing" (1989) and past and present Black feminist luminaries including Fanny Lou Hamer, Patricia Hill Collins and Lucille Clifton. But the installation is, foremost, an homage to Erykah Badu's 2000 song "Bag Lady," which furnishes the soundtrack's background beat, the sustaining rhythms that carry sisterhood.

glyneisha also grants personhood and personality to her depicted objects and spaces, acknowledging that agency is a more-than-



Cory Imig, *Volumetric Form IV*, 2019, Steel, 144 x 200 x 200", Courtesy the Artist. Photo: EG Schempf

human prerogative. Figures, objects and spaces are equals, vessels for memories that inhabit the present. Five graphite drawings on canvas—the earliest works in her installation—cast the artist's memories of a breakup, full of tension and growing separation, onto her then-present living space. We carry our memories and nostalgia carries us, no matter where we are and how often we move. Memories cast long shadows, sparing nothing.

The more recent collages and assemblages are about letting go. They also celebrate Black traditions, rituals and spiritual practices of survival and healing transmitted by women in the home and extending to semi-public spaces like the stoop, the porch, the roof, the beauty shop, the botanica. Mirrors and windows abound in these works: portals and passages to unbounded elsewhere. Spaces of reflection and refraction, they are also sites of affirmation, self-invention and transcendence—the stages where the work of memory turns desiring and inventive to make space for ourselves in the story.

Kathy Liao's three large, immersive works depict the ways in which longing carries intimacy and personal memories across distances, culture and infrastructure. These works depict a bedroom, an airport terminal and a mass-transit platform—space akin to those mobilized in the work of Imig and glyneisha.

Mostly black-and-white, Liao's large-shaped work on paper *Without* (2018) also echoes the evocation of memory, distance and nostalgia in glyneisha's graphite works. But Liao's blue wash, deftly shading specific areas, both modulates the mood of the work and subtly brings into play

the transnational, colonial history of indigo. A tilted-up bed occupies most of the surface of *Without*, with its black-and-white striped linen and gridded headboard, wooden floor and wall covering. A colorful figure—the sole injection of color in this black and blue work—inserts herself in the story. Between memory, dream and desire, image-making is a way for Liao to give form to the relationships that make her, to make them present despite the distance.

In *In Between the Lines* (2020), a bevy of planes land and take off on near and far landing strips as isolated female figures, seen in profile from the back, make their ways forward through winding security lines. In the foreground, a small group of people huddle,

waiting for... arrival or departure? If the airport is often theorized as a heterotopia, Liao's work makes tangible the lived experience of perpetual transit, a space of freedom and precarity. The painting also casts longing as a complex relationship to a past that never was, and a future that may never be—both here and there; neither here nor there. Liao's collage renders this experience thick and layered, it substantiates it, materializes it, inserts it in now-time.

Something of a departure for Liao, her newest work, *流年* [*liú nián*] (2021), was fueled by both the fellowship award and the isolating experience of the pandemic. The ambitious multi-panel work translates what the artist has learned from collage into painting. An isolated couple, parent and child, are seen in an empty mass-transit system. Shadows intimate other isolated presences. Danger and safety blend; hazard and refuge.

Charlotte Street Foundation Fellows • 2020 invites us to reconsider how we inhabit and move through space. What carries us? What do we carry? How do we attune ourselves to each other, to a more-than-human worlds, and sense forward.

—Sylvie Fortin is an independent curator, researcher, critic, and editor based between Montréal and New York. She is the Curator-in-Residence 2019–2021 at Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts in Omaha; Executive/Artistic Director of La Biennale de Montréal (2013–2017); Executive Director/Editor of "ART PAPERS" (2004–2012) in Atlanta; and Curator of Manif 5 – the 5th Québec City Biennial (2010). Fortin lectures internationally and her critical essays and reviews have been published in numerous catalogues, anthologies and periodicals, including "Art/Agenda," "Artforum International," "ART PAPERS," "Art Press," "C Magazine," "Flash Art," "Frieze" and others.

Cover images (top to bottom): glyneisha, *Pack Li.gh.te* (installation view), 2021, Graphite, shelving, glass jars, found and gathered natural materials, family artifacts, audio collage assemblage produced by the artist, blk bosom, and soupdreams in collaboration with Strange Fruit Femmes, Courtesy the Artist. Photo: EG Schempf; Cory Imig, *Linear Spaces (blue)*, 2019, Ribbon, ratchet straps, and hardware, Dimensions variable, Courtesy the Artist. Photo: EG Schempf; Kathy Liao, (artwork left to right) *流年* [*liú nián*], 2021, Oil and acrylic on panels, 120 x 180", Courtesy the Artist; *Without*, 2018, Collage, ink, charcoal, gesso, litho crayon, and pencil on paper, 115 x 168", Courtesy the Artist. Photo: EG Schempf