

LOVE LETTERS TO BALTIMORE + THE DMV

CURATED BY

NERISSA PAGLINAUAN + RYAN JAFAR ARTES

MAY 3 - JUNE 1 ♥ 16 W. NORTH AVE + MOTOR HOUSE

ARTISTS

- KURT ASTUDILLO ♥ HANNAH ATALLAH ♥ NANCY BERSON
 KATHERINE BROADWATER ♥ RIEKO CHACEY ♥ YUNKYOUNG CHO
 ANNA DIVINAGRACIA ♥ BARBARA HAN ♥ JAHRU
 ANNETTE WILSON JONES ♥ PRIYANKA K ♥ ADELE YISEOL KENWORTHY
 HEEJO KIM ♥ MYUNG SOOK KIM ♥ PAIGE DASOL KIM
 JINYOUNG KOH ♥ ANTHONY LE ♥ NIPUN MANDA
 TAYYAB MAQSOOD ♥ SUSHMITA MAZUMDAR ♥ GABRIEL PILAC MELENDRES
 ADRIANNA MORGAN ♥ KAT NAVARRO ♥ NADIA NAZAR
 JOSH NGUYEN ♥ LYNN NGUYEN ♥ SOOKKYUNG PARK
 SYEDA RAHMAN ♥ YEEVE RAYNE ♥ HANNAH FLORENCE SHAW
 ASMA SHIKOH ♥ AMELIE WANG



*Names in purple indicate that the artists' works are installed at both 16 W. North Ave and Motor House.

CURATORIAL LOVE LETTERS

Dear Community,

We excitedly and warmly welcome you to Love Letters to Baltimore + the DMV. Our exhibit is a tribute to themes of home, belonging, and love, with the understanding that any of these seemingly simple notions are actually quite complex on their own, and especially in combination. We were humbled by our community's response to our call for art, centered around the question, "What makes (y)our home?"

We, the curators, are Nerissa Paglinauan [ne-REE-suh pag-lee-NOW-un] and Ryan Jafar Artes [REYE-un JAH-fur AR-tes]. Nerissa is Filipino-American and was born and raised in Baltimore County. Ryan is a transracial transnational South Asian Indian American adoptee and was born in Calcutta, India and raised in Baltimore City. We infused our curation process with care, intentionality, and thoughtfulness, and love what has come together in collaboration with the artists whose work is present. The response to our call to Baltimore and the DMV was incredible, as you will experience while you are here in the gallery spaces of 16 W. North Avenue and Motor House at 120 W. North Avenue.

Our curation process was a love letter in and of itself. We carefully, deeply, and meaningfully discussed all aspects of all of the work submitted for consideration using a variety of ways to communicate, most notably on a spreadsheet on which we conversed our way towards the work displayed in this exhibit for you to peruse. Through discussing the work and the artists' expressions of love towards their homes, as they each understand their homes to be, we built our connection and friendship.

Josh Nguyen's *Postcards from Home* fully embodies the exhibit's themes, using postcards to interact with the place understood as a home. Asma Shikoh's *House of Praise* aims to achieve "a sense of belonging while being out of place." Kurt Astudillo's *Going Out* addresses themes of assimilation and "confusion of integration."

The works we selected showcase how, and that, ideas of home are different for different people. Home can be a feeling, a place, a building, a city, a country, a culture, a family, a group of friends, or something else entirely. The vast range of APIMEDA (Asian, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, Desi American) immigrant experiences are on full display before us, in this exhibit.

We present *Love Letters to Baltimore + the DMV* in honor, memory, and recognition of Josh Nguyen and Nipun Manda, who have work present, and Patricia Thomson, the curator Ryan Jafar Artes' grandmother. Love letters are a powerful way to get in touch with each other, and ourselves. Thank you for joining us at *Love Letters to Baltimore + the DMV*.

Sincerely,

Nerissa Paglinauan and Ryan Jafar Artes

Dear Nerissa,

Curating *Love Letters to Baltimore + the DMV* was a dream. Thank you for your thoughtful perspective, knack for understanding, and especially for your behind-the-scenes work, which afforded me such a delightful experience. I appreciate all you do, for me and for our community.

Ryan <3

Dear Ryan,

It's amazing to me that we are meeting each other in person for the first time here at Asia North! Having you as a co-curator to bounce ideas off of has been a joy and so helpful throughout this curation process. Thank you for gifting us your brilliant theme for Asia North this year. I appreciate you, friend.

With love,
Nerissa

P.S. -- Special thanks to Central Baltimore Partnership and Twenty-Two Lanes Development for allowing Asia North to take over 16 W. North Avenue for the month; Mika J. Nakano for her beautiful Asia North papercut-inspired graphics; Joanna Pecore, Jack Dana and Abby Becker for their support behind the scenes in enabling us to curate this exhibit and see it come to life; Camille Kashaka for being a steadfast exhibit partner at Motor House; Daniel Breen for his installation expertise; Floyd Godsey II for making the gallery space ready for install; Yeeve Rayne for her *Love Letters to Each Other* interactive addition to the exhibition; Bruce MacKenzie for his loving and steadfast support of Nerissa, including helping with last minute errands, in the intense lead up to Asia North; Nishant Manda for ensuring that his father's work is represented in the show to honor his memory; and Danielle Williams and Jeanne Marie Martineau for completing, with such care and love, Josh Nguyen's vision for his work in this exhibit and encouraging him to pursue his art; and all of the Asia North artists for sharing with us their inspiring work.





Rieko Chacey

Rieko Chacey grew up in Tochigi, Japan. When she was 18 years old, she came to the US as an international student to study at Towson University in Maryland. After receiving a bachelor's degree in fine art, she worked as a professional graphic designer, motion graphic designer, E-pub designer, and web designer. While working full time during the day, she studied at the University of Baltimore at night. After receiving a Master of Fine Arts, she shifted her career to teach time-based media, interactive media, and design.

www.riekochacey.com

IG @riekochacey

Love + Home + Baltimore, 2024

Digital Collage, 24" x 16"

Different peoples with diverse backgrounds thrive in Baltimore because the city itself has different personalities —the pretty face as Charm City that attracts many tourists and the strong industrial and hard-working character. It's filled with soulful, honest, exuberant yet sometimes rambunctious people like you and me.



Anna Divinagracia (b. 1997)

She/They

Anna Divinagracia is an artist and photographer, whose work is inspired by her shared experiences growing up in the Philippines and living in Baltimore. Born in 1997 in Davao City, Philippines, Divinagracia's artistic journey began at a young age when she discovered her passion for viewing and capturing the world around her through the lens of her camera. With a particular curiosity towards the intricacies and nuances of Filipino and American culture, Divinagracia uses her art to explore themes of love, destiny, home, identity, and acculturation as an immigrant. Divinagracia holds a bachelor's degree in marketing from the illustrious Morgan State University and is currently in residency at Creative Alliance, Baltimore, MD.

annadivinagracia.com IG @divinagraciaphoto

Saan Ka Man Naroroon, Carry Me Across the Sea, 2023

Bamboo, Reeds, Nipa Palm, abaca, hemp, jute, Copper
34" x 32" x 48"

Divinagracia uses a *balikbayan* box to create a traditional *Bahay Kubo*, a nipa house that is indigenous to the Philippines. The balikbayan box is a cardboard box full of foreign goods and gifts sent by OFWs (Overseas Filipino Workers) back to the Philippines for their family and loved ones at home. The balikbayan box symbolizes the spirit of *bayanihan* or communal unity in Filipino culture. Through this work, Divinagracia investigates Philippine culture and the ways it shifts forms through the diaspora. A home built on the foundation of community.





Anna Divinagracia (b. 1997)
She/They

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The Baltimore I Remember, 2023

Inkjet print mounted on chloroplast and wood panel
36" x 48"

The Baltimore I Remember is an ode to my personal experience of Baltimore while living at 106 N Eutaw. Baltimore is my second home—the city that raised me. This artwork touches on the rapid widespread changes that are happening across the city as redevelopment takes over. It aims to celebrate the Baltimore I knew and the Baltimore that will come to be. Making space for new possibilities while holding reverence for what was and the people that make this city the greatest city in America.

Priyanka K (b. 1989)

She/They

Priyanka K is a visual storyteller and printmaker from Kolkata, eastern India. She currently teaches illustration at the Maryland Institute College of Art and has a studio at Area 405.

priyanka-k.com
IG @priyankakay

Baltimore Sketchbook,

2019-present

Sketchbook, mixed media:
gouache, marker,
color pencil, ink, 8" x 8" x 1.5"

This work is an ongoing project in which I have been making mixed-media pieces in my sketchbook, on-site, at various places in Baltimore. I started doing this in 2018 when I moved to the city from my hometown of Kolkata, India, as a way to immerse and orient myself to life here. I continue to record moments, places, and outings in it.



Clockwise from top left

Wyman Park, 2021

Lanvale Street, 2019

The Crown Downstairs, 2021

North Avenue, 2019



#22-165



#22-147



#22-135



#22-186



#22-156

Realistically Impossible to Make a Pure Straight Line Outside of Scientific or Mathematical Parameters, 2022
Oil on canvas, 14" x 11" each

Jinyoung Koh (b. 1981)
he/him/his

Jinyoung Koh is a graduate program director and an assistant professor in Department of Art + Design, Art History, Art Education at Towson University in Maryland. Dr. Koh completed a Doctor of Education in Art & Art Education from Columbia University in New York. He earned a Master of Fine Arts in Photo & Media from the California Institute of the Arts and a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. His art has received numerous awards and is included in the collections of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Rockefeller Foundation.

I delve into the multifaceted theme of home and identity. Much like the elusive perfection of straight lines, the notion of home extends beyond physical boundaries, prompting a nuanced exploration of affection and critique within our relationships with our sense of belonging. Drawing on a familial memory from 1995, deeply rooted in cultural heritage, my art reflects on the resilience of tradition and the fluidity of identity. A small moment in the Winter of 1995 held significant cultural context, which I am now learning to understand as an adult. I recall my grandmother slipping a yellow envelope with \$70 into my sister's hand when she got accepted into college. Raised by my grandmother from a young age in a rural area while my mother lived and worked separately in a different city, my sister's achievement held particular meaning. My deceased grandmother harbored a desire to learn how to read and study in an academic setting, yet cultural expectations for women in Korea prevented her from even attending primary school. My father recounted that over the course of a few months, my grandmother tirelessly wove a white and airy ramie fabric (plain-weave Mosi) to present the congratulatory money to my sister in Hansan, Seocheon. Ramie and hemp plants, the oldest fibers cultivated for fabrics in the rural area my grandmother resided in, were used in the weaving, a craft to which the women of this area were devoted. It was expected that they were responsible for this craft. The Hansan region was renowned for fine ramie and its advantageous ramie-growing conditions. The process began with the harvest of ramie shoots, which were peeled using specially made knives. Then the shoots were meticulously split into singular fibers using saliva, teeth, and lips. The painstaking practice often resulted in cuts to the lips and tongue, as well as calluses, as the mouth was used intently to create thin fibers ready to be spun and lengthened on a loom. This arduous labor was passed down from mother to daughter and daughter-in-law.

Through my brushstrokes, I strive to encapsulate the timeless essence of Korean culture while navigating the impermanence of existence and identity, honoring the enduring legacy of craftsmanship and the transformative power of artistic expression. The intricate process of weaving ramie fabric, passed down through generations in the Hansan region, serves as a poignant symbol of cultural continuity and the enduring strength of tradition, intertwining personal and collective narratives in a rich tapestry of meaning. In weaving together personal narratives with broader cultural themes, my work serves as a testament to the transformative power of art in shaping our understanding of self and society.

Sushmita Mazumdar (b. 1968)

Sushmita Mazumdar works across stories, book arts, and mixed media, to explore memories of home, heritage, and her migration from India. She mixes into her work present-day places which inspire; and the community who collaborate, discuss, and respond to inform her creations. After a 15-year career as an art director, Sushmita started writing stories about her childhood to show her American children how different yet wonderful lives can be. She made the stories into unique books by hand, launching Handmade Storybooks in 2007 to encourage intergenerational story-sharing. In 2013 she opened Studio Pause, a community space for art and stories, in Arlington, VA. Her work has been shown at the Smithsonian, DC Public Libraries, Arlington Arts, and Virginia Folklife.

SushmitaMazumdar.com Facebook.com/studiopausebysush
IG @sushmita_artist_writer IG @studiopause

Kanyadaan, Again, 2023

Poem (2021) and mixed media on canvas, 24" x 48"

I wrote "Kanyadaan, Again" on the extremely emotional day before my US citizenship interview. I came from India to the US to marry my sweetheart, who is American. It took me years to apply for citizenship because India insists you surrender your Indian citizenship to get your American one, and so it was a really hard decision. However, recent events had pushed me in that direction. My first Indian friend in the US, Ketan, went through the process a year earlier and had invited me to his citizenship ceremony. When I shared this poem with him he totally connected with it. That was a very powerful moment for me.

In a popular Indian movie, a 'non-resident Indian' (NRI) living in the UK sings of remembering the smell of the soil of home. But as I created this artwork, words sewn onto canvas, with Indian wedding-themed papers I had brought here decades ago, calligraphy in my recently re-learned native Bangla script, the auspicious red—the Bengali color of marriage, and the soil, it struck me that how we tell the story of our "Here" is as diverse as each storyteller. I wonder if the viewer would know where the soil I included here is from—from the US or from India. And does it even matter.

Kanyadaan is Sanskrit for giving away the bride and in the poem I ask my father if he will give me away again, 22 years after he gave me away in marriage to his best friend's nephew, this time from my Motherland to my Childrenland.



Gabriel Pilac Melendres (b. 1996)

***Things That I Harbor*, 2023**
Photography, 13" x 20"

Dreamer



Adrianna Morgan

Adrianna Morgan uses an interdisciplinary approach to express her creativity as an artist. She strives to work resourcefully, often using materials from her previous artworks and re-purposing unconventional or found items. Adrianna explores and connects with her ethnically diverse Caribbean heritage as a Trinidadian-American through the creation of her wearable art and installation pieces. She hopes that her work sparks curiosity, encourages conversation, and fosters connection points with the viewers' cultural background as well.

IG @a.morgan.art, behance.net/adriannamorgan

***Come Fly with Me - Macaw Kite*, 2024**

Acrylic Paint & Spray Paint, 24" x 18"

I was born in Baltimore City in 1993 to Trinidadian immigrants who arrived to the US in 1986-1988. Subsequently, I am Trinidadian-American, specifically of Indo-Caribbean descent.

Over the years, we have lived in four homes throughout Pikesville, located in Baltimore County. In our second home, I have the warmest memories of my parents spending time flying a red-and-green macaw kite with me in a nearby park. I have cherished this particular memory of quality time with them from then to now, especially knowing they were working hard day in and day out to ensure and establish stability and comfort for our family in their respective fields of work.

The wingspan of the macaw kite in flight stretches over a map Baltimore County and into Baltimore City, containing the path from the location of the hospital in which I was born through to our family's current home. Honored towards the tail of the macaw is the map of my family's homeland, where my parents' regions of origin are highlighted. Elements of this piece appear and disappear depending on where the viewer stands speaking to the wider notions of how one sees and retains a memory, how one views 'home', and what serves as a point of focus: This memory to me is strong and warm yet hazy, my parents uprooted themselves from their home and now call this theirs while it has always been mine, and at the time, all I wanted to do was to enjoy and focus on flying my beautiful macaw kite.





Kat Navarro

Kat Navarro is a multidisciplinary artist and animator. Their work combines digital and analog techniques to create vibrant, textural, and fluid animations with stories that intercross personal history, identity, and a little bit of the fantastical.

katnavarro.com IG @katogotchi

***Kalapati without a house*, 2023**

Mix media animation projection

Duration: 16 minutes

Kalapati without a house layers ideas of home, myths, loss, and language. The animation runs on a constant loop, only changing every two minutes to tear apart the *Bahay Kubo*. The visuals and sound reflect on my family's last memories of their home before immigrating to Baltimore. They used to own pigeons, who would return when trying to sell them off, so my Lolo (grandfather) tore down their home. Less and less returned in the week before they left the Philippines. My Tito (uncle) recalls their first pair of pigeons staying behind the longest before they too left to find a new home. Interview clips of my Tito and Lola (grandmother) are spoken in Tagalog and interspersed in the ambient audio. The interviews are left untranslated to signify the loss of spoken word stories and language with time and assimilation.



Nadia Nazar (b. 2002)

she/her

Nadia Nazar is a sculptor, animator, climate organizer, and musician based in Baltimore, MD. She was born and raised in Baltimore County Maryland, but calls Kerala, India her homeland. Her work delves into her relationship with the lands she has resided on, and the structures in place that have impacted and exploited both the land and (her) people. Her sculptural body of work primarily consists of metalworking, casting, and biofabrication. Her animation work tells stories through experimental animation, especially puppet stop-motion. Nadia's work has been exhibited in multiple exhibitions throughout Baltimore and recently at the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum. Nadia co-founded Zero Hour, an international youth climate organization and served as its Co-Executive Director and Art Director for four years. She has been featured in *The New York Times*, CNN, MSNBC, i-D, Vox, *Huffington Post*, *USA Today*, and more for work in the Climate Movement.

nadianazar.com IG @nadianazar

Mama (leaving Punalur), 2023

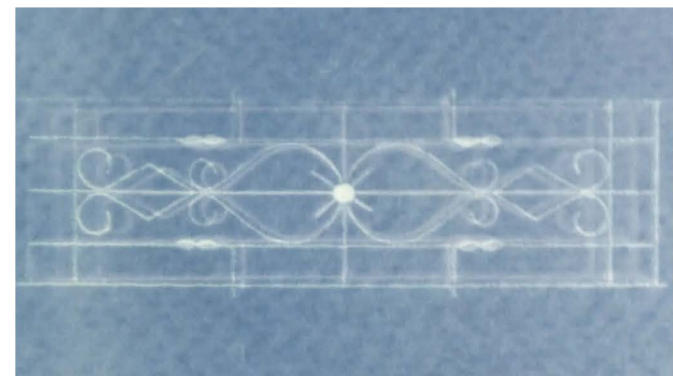
Cyanotype on watercolor paper, 3" x 5"

A small cyanotype print of a 35mm film photo taken last summer of the artist's mother looking out a train window in Kerala, India leaving her local childhood railway station.

Mama, 2024

Animation (Cyanotype, e. Coli), Duration: 3:35

This experimental animation film surrounds the relationship of the artist and her mother by exploring memories of place, home, homeland, the environment, and traditions and processes such as braiding.





Yeeve 이재인 Rayne (b.1978)

She/her

See bio on her label for *Dragon Song*.

Yeeve.ck.page IG @Yeeve.rayne

The Rebirth of the Golden Butterfly Queen, 2024

Mixed Media (Oil on canvas, paper collage, mosaic tiles, dried flowers),
84" x 50"

"Why is it so hard to know what I want?"

The alchemical journey of this painting was my answer.

I discovered I wasn't clear on who "I" was.

I was disconnected from my own desire.

How can you know what you want

When you don't know where you end

And another begins?

I didn't have clear boundaries, so

Foreign energies had taken up residence within my body.

Repression & scarcity from my ancestors (The trail of glass tiles behind my back)

Energetic imprints from former lovers

(Images of past partners collaged in my womb)

Pain from past lives where I was killed because I was born a girl.

(Dried daffodils)

To reclaim my body, I covered the men of my past with the blood of my womb.

When a pregnant belly emerged,

I added the chaos of uniquely shaped tiles

to represent breaking out of the constraints of my lineage.

The dried flowers are my lost soul parts

Being given the chance to fully bloom Through my current incarnation.

The central image of me against a tree:

The branches stretching behind me like vertebrae and wings...

Supporting me like the bones of my own spine.

With the support of Mother Earth,

I alchemize the threads of the past To birth something entirely new:

My original self.

Finally at home in her own body.

The Golden Butterfly Queen-

Who can fly without wings, Be at home with no house,

And rule a kingdom without issuing a single command

Yeeve 이재인 Rayne (b.1978)

She/her

Yeeve is a Korean-American Artist and Priestess.
She invites reconnection to the infinite creator within -

To see yourself through a mythic lens and
discover the treasure of your life, just as it is...

Yeeve's art celebrates the beauty of every cycle of life,
her paintings often created in organic layers, over time.

A shamanic, multi-media conversation
That answers the deepest questions of her heart
Through personal revelations.

"Timeless Stories for the End of Time"
are a trilogy of creation myths evoking
The voice and wisdom of Mother Earth.

Through shamanic performances,
Yeeve shares these stories as maps
for the transformational journeys
we each undertake to awaken to
our own beauty, worth, and unconditional love.

Yeeve.ck.page IG @Yeeve.rayne

Dragon Song, 2023

Video, duration: 3 minutes

Yeeve Rayne, writer + performer; Arun Boddu, director; Tony
Hitchcock, cinematographer

A performance of original Korean song from the creation myth "The
Tree Beyond Good & Evil," a story of unconditional love and radical
acceptance.

A story of coming home to one's self and their place in the world.

