



Alison Chen



What inspires you artistically? (Other artists, poetry literature, places, feelings etc.)

I draw inspiration from my relationships with those closest to me, and in particular, with my family. My everyday lived experience with them is what fuels my ideas for my work. Beyond that, I get inspiration from a myriad of things from early performance artists and the Fluxus art movement, to the heaviness of heartbreak, the writings of Ocean Vuong, my kids' hands, and the ocean.

Have you always worked in this medium, if not briefly explain your artistic journey?

I have always worked as a lens-based artist, using both photography and video to create my artwork. My process involves evaluating

and analyzing, and the camera is the tool with which I choose to see. Sometimes that means creating moments for the camera and documenting their existence. Other times, the editing process of looking through photographs affords me perspective of distance and time to look closely at what was captured

Please briefly explain your process?

If she could speak, she would sing is from an ongoing long-term project that looks at my personal understanding of motherhood. With this body of work, I am combing through and responding to the imagery that exists within our family archive of photographs. For many pieces, I use those images to gain insight into what motherhood might have been like for those in my maternal lineage and how those experiences may inform my own experience as mother.

The photograph that appears in this piece is a studio portrait of my late grandmother in her 20s. I found the image while cleaning out her house after she died and the image caused me to reflect on her spirit. The image reminds me of the performer qualities that my grandmother had - she loved to sing and during the last years of her life battling Alzheimer's, she expressed herself mostly in song. Her story is complicated and filled with trauma. There is little that I know from her point of view and this piece is my rumination on who she was.

How has being a mother influenced your practice?

Becoming a mother has intensely influenced my practice. On a fundamental level, becoming a mother really changed my relationship to the world, time, and mortality. My perspective of life was turned upside-down. And most obviously, motherhood directly impacted my practice in that it is a major theme in the work that I create.

How do you see your role in the world as an artist/mother?

As an artist/mother, I hope to create dialogue and challenge our societal expectations regarding women and motherhood. We live in a time of polarization, where things exist as black and white, good and bad. I want the work to question that space, to shed light on all the nuanced grey area and the complexities that surround being a woman, being a mother, or really just being.



Images courtesy of the artist and Torrance Art Museum

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