

## A Moment of Omens

Julie Lee, Carnegie Mellon University '22



*A Moment of Omens* is an installation of my mother's apron, slippers, rosary, and norigae (a decorative pendant in Korean culture), as well as a torn photograph of her and her lover (my father) with red tape. Here, the apron and slippers are presented to the viewer, lying in wait for its intended occupant, my mother.



They symbolize the assignment of the important work that my mother is expected to do: housework. She is expected to carry on this feminine tradition of being a homemaker, as well as experiencing the prescribed notions it carries. The rosary and norigae act as protective charms to ward off any evil, but they also represent the split between my mother's dedication to Western customs (and therefore, assimilation) and Eastern customs (and therefore, staying true to her indigenous roots).



At the center of this presentation lies a torn photograph of my mother and her lover, pieced together with red tape. Here, there arises the question: does the red tape symbolize the seemingly fateful union of the couple, or is it an attempt to obscure the reality of misogynist subjugation that awaits the couple, especially the woman? Overall, this installation brings into question what lies ahead for my mother's future (and her selfhood), as well as the futures of countless other Korean-American women. This piece centers an experience that Korean-American women face within their own community.



Historically, Korean society has maintained the social structure of unfair social treatment and distribution of unequal roles which Confucianism supported with a specific tenet on women's obedience, translating as "to the father when young; to the husband when married; and to the son in old age." When Korean society experienced industrialization and globalization from Western capitalist imperialism, women would eventually enter the workforce to support their households, only to experience poor working conditions, low wages, and sexual harassment. This experience followed these women even when they migrated to other places for better opportunities, especially in the United States.



Korean-American women have had the sexist notion of the docile, submissive, and obedient housewife pushed upon them, limiting their ability to create their own futures. Furthermore, under imperialist capitalism, housework has been transformed to be seen as a natural attribute of women, as if it's their internal need and aspiration. With all this being established, Korean-American women experience a particular struggle of asserting their autonomy and taking control of their own narratives (both within and outside of their communities) - which is what I explore in my artistic practice. This installation is an invitation to observe how Korean-American women are perceived within their own spaces, as well as a confrontation of the racial misogyny these women experience to this day.



*Meet the piece: When it comes to Embodied's primary themes of feminism, gender, and sexuality, this piece presents a feminist perspective centering on an experience that Asian-American women (who were historically excluded from the predominantly white feminist movement) face within their own communities. Asian-American women have the sexist notion of the docile, submissive, and obedient housewife pushed upon them, limiting their ability to create their own futures. Furthermore, under imperialist capitalism, housework has been transformed to be seen as a natural attribute of women, as if it were their internal need and aspiration. With all this being established, Asian-American women experience a particular struggle of asserting their autonomy and taking control of their own narratives (both within and outside of their communities) - which is what I explore in my artistic practice. This installation is an invitation to observe how Asian-American women are perceived within their own spaces, as well as a confrontation of the precarious realities these women experience to this day.*