

A.I.R.

phantom charges 2025 A.I.R. National Members Exhibition

Curated by Elizabeth Larison

No one is an island and no thing exists in a vacuum: every thing bears the phantom charges of what came before it. These charges function as energies, debts, designations, or responsibilities. They are phantom forces, invisible yet ever present—the culmination of what is inherited as fact, combined with intentions and offerings for the future. The works in this year's A.I.R. National Members Exhibition vibrate with phantom charges of their own, psychic residues that orbit objects of refuse and rituals of devotion.

Many of the works on view gesture toward the weight of family histories, by invoking memories of departed loved ones or addressing the compounded experiences of migration, colonialism, and cultural devastation. Fabric arts utilized by the artists—such as quilting, weaving, and needlework—or the incorporation of textiles often allude to themes of care, attention, and comforting quotidian traditions that inform a sense of identity and kinship.

Holly Wong's quilt-like sculpture integrates patchwork techniques inspired by Korean bojagi to commemorate the artist's deceased mother, whose spirit is represented as a glowing light that re-emerges into the realm of the living. Employing traditions of quilting passed down from her elders, **Sabra Moore** loosely pieces together parts of her grandmother's complex life story across gessoed paper panels. **Robin Dintiman's** visceral, brooding sculpture is composed of woven funeral baskets collected from her mother's memorial. Encased in urethane foam and resin, the resulting work contemplates inevitable decay and the human impulse to defy it through preservation. **Nicole Havekost's** abstract charcoal drawings—methodically punctured from behind with a needle—mimic the pores and wrinkles of human skin. “The paper remembers,” as they say—much like the body, its creases, tears, and punctures serve as an enduring record of all it has experienced.

Other works recall the labor and responsibility required to preserve memory, identity, and tradition in the face of volatile circumstances. **Olga Hiiva's** performance video captures the sorrows and anger associated with her family's forced migration, as its central figure begrudgingly drags a bedsheet and its contents—representations of comfort and stability—onward into the distance. Employing repetitive and ritual-like processes, **Gongsan Kim** pays homage to those who have suffered, and those who continue to suffer, under the dictatorship in North Korea. In her work, scores of burnt burlap pieces are rolled into layered monochrome grids, symbolizing the depths of collective loss and dehumanization. **Duvenavue Santé Johnson's** abstract mixed media collage employs the geometry and aesthetics of patchwork to communicate the fragmentation of memory, historical inheritance, and processes of deliberate reinvention. **Nicolei Buendia Gupit** revives traditions lost in her family's emigration from the Philippines by teaching herself to make handwoven jute *lambat* (cast nets). Her handmade paper reliefs of the nets commemorate these practices for future generations, safeguarding them from the risk of being forgotten.

Heritage also intersects with the force of one's own unique identity and experience, as seen in **Amy Yoshitsu's** absurdist photograph of an infrastructural landscape. Created from a multi-step process of sewing printed images into sculptural forms, it conveys the distorted psychogeography born of familial migration and attempted assimilation. Similarly, **Gina Herrera's** life-size sculptural self-portrait reveals the elements of her personality and her Costa Rican and Native American ancestry that she kept concealed while serving in the U.S. armed forces. No longer under cover, she conveys these aspects of her identity through salvaged fabrics and found objects.

As some artworks mine the hidden charges of family history, others focus on rituals of care and intention imparted upon future generations. The weightlessness of **Carrie Scanga's** sewn tissue-paper backpacks alludes to the immaterial elements—like generosity, self-respect, wisdom, core values—that parents and caregivers bestow

lovingly upon their children in service of a hopeful and prepared future. Similarly, **Cozette Russell** contemplates an object integral to daily routines of caring for her son. The photograph of her child's custom ankle-foot brace is imbued with contradicting energies that reflect the complexity and devotion of parenthood: frustration and triumph, fragility and support, the immediacy of childhood and the ghostly remnants that mark its imperceptible evolution.

Other works consider futurity and responsibility through the lens of the environment—and imply the necessity of an ecological stewardship that does not place humans at its center. Coated in a cracked glaze, **Irja Bodén's** concentric vessels reflect upon the loss of “place”(ort) as a result of commercial mining operations in Sweden. They are both bottomless containers of grief and keepers of lost futures. Similarly, **Martha Sedgwick's** abstract blur of wild irises captures the fleeting essence of nature's seasonal gifts, which are increasingly threatened by climate change. With an eye to the animal realm, **Rebecca Weisman's** installation reflects on humans' entwined relationship with other earthly inhabitants. Audiences are invited to touch hanging sculptures of whales' inner ear bones, whose haunting yet familiar sounds prompt listeners to consider the oft-disregarded consciousness and subjectivity of the planet's largest mammals.

In some instances, surrealist practices are utilized to expose outmoded designations that enable unchecked habits of consumerism. Through her satirical sculptures, **Jennifer McCandless** considers the presumed difference between animals bred for consumption and those bred for companionship, and reflects on the epitome of so-called “American” identity; looking beyond the associations that enshrine familiar concepts, she portrays them literally. Similarly, **Nancy Daly's** suspicious assemblage—made from up-cycled mass-produced furniture—refuses the associated roles and functions of its recognizable parts. Its illogical form serves as a comment upon its origins: in a consumer-centered system of excess, used furniture is more affordable than its raw materials.

Together, the works in *phantom charges* unearth the influences of complex inheritances, layered realities, and uncertain futures. By encouraging viewers to consider these almost-imperceptible forces, the works underscore notions of interconnectedness and historicity. Whether thorough memorializing the enduring legacy of deceased kin, acknowledging the weight of intergenerational trauma, stressing the quiet manifestations of climate change, or signaling the subjectivity of our animal brethren, *phantom charges* acknowledges these potent immaterial energies, and reminds of the ways in which we, too, have the power and responsibility to shape them.