

here:now Artwork Discussion – Community: In This Together (1)

<https://youtu.be/ANHQViW2XI4>

Thank you for joining us for a virtual here:now Artwork Discussion with the Frye Art Museum. My name is Caroline, and I am the Education Coordinator here at the Frye. I will be facilitating today's digital discussion. While we cannot be together in the galleries, we hope you will still enjoy the opportunity to slow down, look closely, and spend some time with a work from the Frye Collection.

It's always fun to look at art by yourself or invite a friend or family member to join you in this discussion. You might also choose to write down your observations or make a drawing in response. If this is the case, please gather your materials now.

We will begin each artwork discussion by taking a quiet moment to simply look at the work of art and observe. Remember there are no right or wrong answers—it's about what you notice or experience when looking. After you have taken a moment to observe on your own, I will ask some questions to guide your looking and provide information about the artwork before we end.

You can expand or minimize the video on your screen for the discussion. You can also access closed captioning through the settings tool. Take a moment to see what works best for your viewing.

Today's theme is **Community: In This Together**. Described often as a fellowship, individuals of a community share commonalities, whether in attitudes, interests, or goals. As we discuss today's work of art, I encourage you to consider the role community plays in your life.

This is the artwork we will be looking at today. We will take pauses in between each set of questions to give you time to look closely at the artwork and think about your

responses. Remember: you may pause this video at any time to spend more time on one of the slides.

To start our discussion, please take 30 seconds to look quietly at this piece. You might start at the top corner of the canvas, moving across and down. You may move close to the screen to see details or step back for a new perspective. Your cursor is a great tool to trace and track details within the artwork.

Thank you for your quiet observation.

We will now move into our guided questions. If you are looking with a friend or family member, we hope you will share your observations, or consider writing down or sketching your answers.

1. There are many things to look at here. What immediately catches your attention? What are the things that you noticed after looking for longer?
2. How would you describe this collection of things? Do these things have anything in common?
3. What kind of feelings do these objects bring out? Celebration? Appreciation?
4. The title of this installation is Altar. An altar is a space where many Asian and Asian American families come to honor their ancestors. If you could make a tribute for an important person in your life, who would it be? What types of objects would you include as an offering to your person?

Thank you for taking the time to share and reflect on your observations. I would now like to share some information on this piece.

Jane Wong (American, b. 1984)

Altar, 2019

Artificial oranges and flowers, electric candles, funeral money, paper envelopes, maneki-neko, ceramic cups, rice wine, air plant, haw flakes, SkyFlakes crackers, pineapple cakes, reproductions of artist's family photographs, digital text animation
Dimensions variable, framed photographs: 16 x 20 in. Each

Courtesy of the artist.

Installation view, Frye Art Museum, 2019. Photo: Jueqian Fang

Jane Wong is a poet based in Seattle and Bellingham, where she teaches at Western Washington University. She has published a book of poetry titled *Overpour*, and has a new forthcoming next year. She has received several awards, including the James W. Ray Distinguished Artist award from the Raynier Institute, which culminated in an exhibition at the Frye Art Museum in 2019.

The work of art we are looking at today, *Altar*, is an installation designed for the Frye's exhibition. *Altar* is a recreation of altars often found in Chinese homes as a means of honoring family members that have died.

The items included in *Altar* allows us a peek into Wong's life, featuring real family photographs, objects, and poetry in honor of her late grandparents. Specifically, the pineapple cakes, rice wine, and funeral money are a reference to Wong's grandfather. While the altar is highly personal, we, as the audience, might find connection through recognizable objects.

The installation also serves as a visual palate for Wong's poetry—poems rotate on the central screen in the form of tributes to her ancestors. Food is a recurrent theme in Wong's poetry, addressing the dichotomy between Wong's life growing up in a Chinese American restaurant in New Jersey and her family's experience of hunger and poverty during the Great Famine of China in the 1960s.

Seeking to honor her family, ancestors, loved ones, and all that sustains life in an otherwise fraught world through writing, Wong implores us to become more attuned to our shared histories.

Altar, and the words contained within the installation, connects Wong with Chinese tradition and her personal ancestry. I'd like to leave you with a line from "A Cosmology", one of the poems featured in Altar.

"I told the earth to settle back down,
to lay deep in its mud armchair,
to soften the static flaring from its mouth.
Can we slow down, tender those we miss?"

Thank you for joining us for a here:now artwork discussion and for being part of the Frye community. We value your support and can't wait to welcome you back to the Museum again soon.