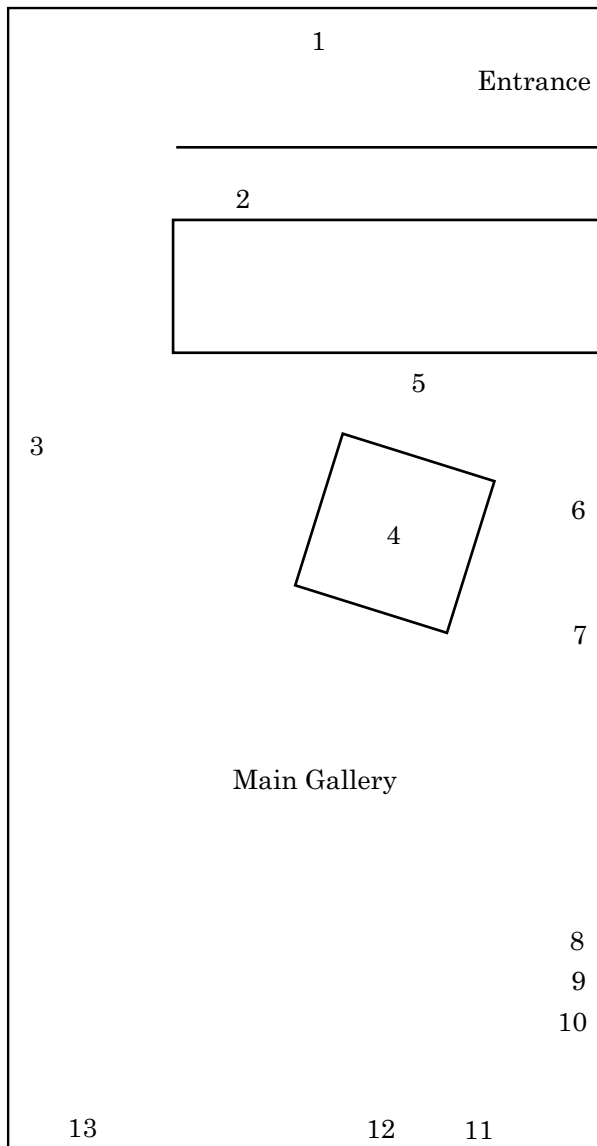


Gallery Map and List of Works

Window facing Pender Street E.



1. untitled (jungle in Laos), 2019

This image is part of Her's public art project *After the Fall of Hmong Tebchaw*. The other ten photographs in the series are displayed in transit shelters around Vancouver, including the southside bus shelter on East Hastings between Gore and Dunleavy Ave.

2. untitled (opium in Rush City, Minnesota), 2019

3. New York Times article, "Hills like home in Laos", June 4 2017

4. *Green Rush*, 2020

5. untitled (landscape in Laos), 2017

6. untitled (landscape in Laos), 2017

7. untitled (landscape in Laos), 2017

8. *My Grandmother's Favourite Grandchild – Pao Houa*, 2017

9. *Tojsiab Woman*, 2015

10. untitled (fake flower stand with opium backdrop in Laos), 2019

11. *Mekong River*, 2017

12. *Opium Flowers in North Mpls*, 2019

13. untitled (opium in Rush City, Minnesota), 2019

Or Gallery// 236 East Pender Street, Vancouver BC, V6A 1T7. // 604.683.7395 // orgallery.org
 Gallery hours 12 - 5PM, Tuesday - Saturday, Free Admission

This exhibition was made possible with the generous assistance of project grants by the British Columbia Arts Council and Canada Council for the Arts, an emergency grant from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, a printing grant from Tricera Print, the sponsorship of the City of Vancouver Transit Shelter Advertisement Program, and the catalyzing support of Joni Cheung and Klodyne Rodney. This exhibition is part of the 2020 Capture Photography Festival Selected Exhibition Program.

The Or Gallery operates principally in Vancouver, a city situated on the unceded territory of the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and Səlilwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) First Nations.

Pao Houa Her: Emplotment

Tuesday June 2 — Saturday June 27, 2020

Curated by Godfre Leung

orgalleryemplotment.org

Hmong-American artist Pao Houa Her takes a kaleidoscope to photographic portraiture. Foreground and background reverse, alternate, bifurcate, and lead their viewers on scavenger hunts and wild goose chases. Her's photographs, one might say, are ungrounded.

Over the last decade, Her's work has explored the diasporic condition of her community, transplanted to the United States after escaping from the conflicts following the American War in Vietnam. *Emplotment* features new and recent work on the slippery Hmong concept *tebchaw* (literally land-place, but variously used to denote region, nation-state, home, or homeland).

Conventionally, the backdrops in Hmong portraiture stand in for an absent ground. Most often, they depict opium fields and jungles in the mountains of Laos. But this is not a Laos that one can literally re-migrate to; the backdrops' mountainscapes emblemize a golden era of Hmong wealth, largely by way of the Hmong's expertise in opium cultivation, before the Laotian Civil War and the subsequent exodus of Hmong people as refugees.

Green Rush, a new multisensory sculptural installation, borrows its title from a 2017 New York Times article, which coined the term to describe an ongoing wave of Hmong migrant workers decamping to Northern California to apply their traditional agricultural knowledge to marijuana farming. The article depicts the resettling of the Hmong dream in Northern California hills previously thought to be barren, instantiating the elusive ground of Hmong portraiture and the kaleidoscopic gaze of the migrant imaginary.

Accompanying the gallery works is a public art project adapted from Her's photographic series *After the Fall of Hmong Tebchaw* (2017–present), displayed in transit shelters around Vancouver. Half of the photographs depict Hmong seniors backed by rich jungle-like arrangements of artificial plants. These portraits were taken at the Hmong Elders Center in St. Paul, Minnesota, one of the community sites most heavily targeted by Seng Xiong. In 2016, Xiong claimed to be working with the US White House and United Nations to secure land in Southeast Asia for the stateless Hmong people. His scheme defrauded more than \$1.7 million, mostly from Hmong seniors in St. Paul. The other half of the series takes place at the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory's tropical plant environment, an important stand-in for "home" for the St. Paul Hmong community.

Emplotment is a formal term used by historians and literary critics to describe the foundation of all histories as kinds of storytelling. In this exhibition, it also alludes to the pursuit of *tebchaw* in the Hmong imagination, the finding of a land-place.

Pao Houa Her is a visual artist living in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA. She works across multiple genres and technologies of photography to address Hmong identity and related notions of desire and belonging within the Hmong American community. Pao was born in the northern jungles of Laos in 1982. With her family she fled the conflict resulting from the American War in Vietnam—like many others, by crossing the Mekong River as an opium-fed baby on her mother's back. After living in refugee camps within Thailand's borders, Pao and her family were sent to the United States in 1986. Pao holds a BFA in Photography from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design and an MFA in Photography from Yale University. She is the recipient of many prestigious fellowships and grants, and has exhibited extensively in Minnesota, as well as across the United States, and more recently, in Southeast Asia. She is represented by Bockley Gallery.

Godfre Leung is a critic and curator based in the territory currently known as Vancouver. His writing has appeared in magazines such as *Art in America*, *C Magazine*, and *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*, and publications by institutions including the Museum of Modern Art and Walker Art Center. Recent publications include contributions to the exhibition catalogues *Tuan Andrew Nguyen: Rung Hoang/Empty Forest* and *Samson Young: It's a heaven over there*, and the collaborative artists' book *AA4* by Peter Happel Christian and Phillip Andrew Lewis.