

As a second-generation immigrant, I occupy an unresolved position in my family's context: embedded with specific values and significant myths, but distanced from that information by virtue of growing up American and English-speaking. It seems especially strange - and, often, dissonant - that the bulk of what I know about my heritage is acquired through a digital proxy. When I speak to my mother, or her mother, the difference is clear. Their knowledge is preloaded, and seamlessly integrated with how they move within the world.

This is not to say that they represent a vault of perfectly recorded information. Mythology is fluid, and the stories they tell me are variations on a spectrum. The versions I know are shaped specifically by the ways they have filtered through descending generations of my family, like a game of Telephone. Further complicating my understanding is the body of modern media that adapts or references these stories, splaying a frayed thread into even finer and subtler filaments. This is not necessarily negative, but it does mean that as a young Asian-American I am constantly defining and redefining a personal distinction between what is recognizable and what is not; what is canon and what is not; what is Chinese and what is not.

36 mm to Heaven is a translation of two personal fears: losing touch completely with my diasporic identity, and gratuitously appropriating Chinese symbolism to combat that process. I have designed, and composed a narrative about, a speculative landscape in the midst of a physical and spiritual plague. Victims of this apocalypse find themselves "smoothed" - that is to say, they are liquified, formless and homogenized. In response, a theocratic pseudo-government comes to power through the weaponization of traditional Chinese occult imagery. I present a collection of artifacts and text documents from this imagined reality. The viewer is encouraged to explore the materials as they see fit.

Materials & Processes Used:

The strongbox: Welded hot-rolled steel, hand-textured and rusted with a diluted ferrous oxide solution.

The mask: Cast bronze from an ABS print, originally sculpted and textured in ZBrush.

The mouthpiece: Turned aluminum and press-fit brass. (Lathe work by Sam Lavoie.)

The scroll: Cherry, woven hemp thread, rice paper.