

Raid the Icebox Now with Triple Canopy in collaboration with CFGNY: Can I Leave You?

November 22, 2019–October 24, 2020

How do artworks and design give rise to nations and national identities? What do they tell viewers about what—and whom—to value? How has the United States been shaped through the consumption and display of goods and the subjugation of people whose labor or likenesses mark them?

This installation considers how early European Americans defined themselves through products from and portrayals of China, whether porcelain bowls or travelogues, out of admiration or animus. The video and sound installation are linked by an epistolary narrative that involves time travel, fictions about China and Chinese people, and a “house attack”—a colonial-era targeting of white elites who pursued wealth and power at the expense of their community.

Can I Leave You? is named after a song from the tradition of Sacred Harp, a particularly democratic form of choral music that originated in New England in the late 1700s. This song describes the anxieties of immigration and raises the possibility of abandoning nationality as the source of belonging. A recording of “Can I Leave You?,” made with the vocal ensemble Ekmeles, provides the basis for the video’s soundtrack.

For *Can I Leave You?*, Triple Canopy commissioned the fashion collective CFGNY (Concept Foreign Garments New York) to create *Synthetic Blend V*, a capsule collection and campaign video. Prompted by the combination of European American and Chinese objects in Pendleton House, CFGNY’s collection considers how Asian American identity is forged and perceived, especially through the global circulation of styles and materials. CFGNY worked with tailors in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam—Nguyễn Huệ Nguyệt, Bùi Thị Mỹ Linh, Bùi Thị Lan Anh, Da Trần Văn Tân, and Namsilk Tailor—to develop designs. These garments provide an uncanny reflection of the objects that surround them. They also give the impression of the house being inhabited—or haunted—by those who don’t belong in such a “typically American” environment, and whose presence might have a transformative effect. CFGNY’s and Triple Canopy’s videos are projected in the Spalter New Media Gallery, and the garments are installed throughout Pendleton House.

Triple Canopy, based in New York and founded in 2007, is a magazine devoted to sustained inquiry and creative research through collaborations with artists, writers, technologists, and designers. Issues are published online and include digital works of art and literature, public conversations, exhibitions, performances, books, and software. Triple Canopy’s installation will also lead to an issue of the magazine that includes works by additional artists, writers, and researchers, to be published in the spring and available at www.canopycanopycanopy.com/.

CFGNY (Concept Foreign Garments New York) is a New York–based collective and fashion label founded in 2016. Begun as a dialogue between Tin Nguyen and Daniel Chew on the intersection of fashion, race, identity, and sexuality, CFGNY continually returns to the term “vaguely Asian”: an understanding of racial identity as a specific cultural experience, combined with the experience of being perceived as other. Rather than represent what it means to be “Asian” in the singular, CFGNY encourages the visualization of the countless ways of being in the plural.

RISD MUSEUM

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CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Triple Canopy

American, 2007–present

A Portal, of the Light Reflected by the Sea, of Notes Never Before

Sung, for Traversing, 2019

Four-channel sound installation

Courtesy of the artists TL173.2019.1

Triple Canopy

American, 2007–present

If the Limbs Grow Too Large for the Body, 2019

Three-channel color video with four-channel sound

Courtesy of the artists TL173.2019.2

CFGNY

American, 2016–present

Synthetic Blend V, 2019

Single-channel color video with sound

Courtesy of the artist EXL10.20193.1

CFGNY

American, 2016–present

Nguyệt Huế Nguyệt

Bùi Thị Mỹ Linh

Bùi Thị Lan Anh

Đa Trần Văn Tân

Namsilk Tailor

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Synthetic Blend V, 2019

Capsule collection with nine looks comprised of seventeen garments

Courtesy of the artist TL167.2019

CFGNY

American, 2016–present

Namsilk Tailor

Double-Collared Button-Up with Stripes (B/W), 2019

Cotton, shell buttons, cotton thread

Courtesy of CFGNY TL167.2019.14



CFGNY

American, 2016–present

Da Trần Văn Tân

Long Smoking Jacket with Yellow Silk Detail, 2019

Cotton, silk, metal zipper, plastic buttons

Courtesy of CFGNY TL167.2019.8



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CFGNY

American, 2016–present

Nguyệt Huế Nguyệt

Fuzzy Vest with Oriental Loops, 2019

Synthetic polymer fiber, cotton thread, metal

Courtesy of CFGNY TL167.2019.3



CFGNY

American, 2016–present

Bùi Thị Mỹ Linh

Skirt with Leather Grid, 2019

Cotton, wool, lamb hide, metal zipper, cotton thread

Courtesy of CFGNY TL167.2019.11



CFGNY

American, 2016–present

Bùi Thị Mỹ Linh

Tennis Dress with Grid, 2019

Cotton, silk, shell buttons, cotton thread

Courtesy of CFGNY TL167.2019.7



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CFGNY

American, 2016–present

Bùi Thị Lan Anh

Open-Mesh Long Sleeve, 2019

Synthetic polymer fiber, cotton thread

Courtesy of CFGNY TL167.2019.10



CFGNY

American, 2016–present

Da Trần Văn Tân

Clubbing Pants with Yellow Pockets, 2019

Cotton, silk, plastic buttons, metal zipper, cotton thread

Courtesy of CFGNY TL167.2019.13



CFGNY

American, 2016–present

Bùi Thị Lan Anh

Front-Zip Drop Pants, 2019

Cotton, metal zipper, cotton thread

Courtesy of CFGNY TL167.2019.15



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CFGNY

American, 2016–present

Namsilk Tailor

Patch Skirt, 2019

Cotton, synthetic polymer fiber blend, metal zipper, cotton thread

Courtesy of CFGNY TL167.2019.4



CFGNY

American, 2016–present

Bùi Thị Mỹ Linh

Two-Toned Leather Vest with Zip, 2019

Lamb hide, synthetic polymer fiber lining, metal zipper, cotton thread

Courtesy of CFGNY TL167.2019.9



CFGNY

American, 2016–present

Nguyệt Huế Nguyệt

Transparent Pants with Floral Embroidered Cuff, 2019

Synthetic polymer fiber, cotton thread

Courtesy of CFGNY TL167.2019.6



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CFGNY

American, 2016–present

Nguyệt Huế Nguyệt

Vest with Tassels, 2019

Synthetic polymer fiber, beads, cotton thread

Courtesy of CFGNY TL167.2019.1



CFGNY

American, 2016–present

Namsilk Tailor

Skirt with Sequins, 2019

Cotton, wool, metal zipper, plastic, sequins, cotton thread

Courtesy of CFGNY TL167.2019.2



CFGNY

American, 2016–present

Da Trần Văn Tân

Long Smoking Jacket in Red Silk, 2019

Silk, metal zipper, plastic buttons

Courtesy of CFGNY TL167.2019.16.ab



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CFGNY

American, 2016–present

Da Trần Văn Tân

Zipped Bell-Bottom Pants in Red Silk, 2019

Silk, metal zipper, plastic buttons

Courtesy of CFGNY TL167.2019.17



CFGNY

American, 2016–present

Namsilk Tailor

Double-Collared Button-Up with Stripes (R/B), 2019

Cotton, shell buttons, cotton thread

Courtesy of CFGNY TL167.2019.5



CFGNY

American, 2016–present

Bùi Thị Lan Anh

Plaid Tank, 2019

Synthetic polymer fiber, cotton thread

Courtesy of CFGNY TL167.2019.12

