

**A.I.**

## ***Rituals and Rebirths***

**Curated by Perule Projects in collaboration with A.I.**

Quỳnh Lâm (b.1988, Vietnam)

*The Price of Humanity*, 2022

Quỳnh Lâm's latest series evolved over the last four years while living a nomadic existence, researching and working in the United States, Europe, and eventually Thailand where she completed her research during her artist residency with Perule Projects. Her full objective is to document and present her research, as well as illustrate her emotional and creative responses to her time living in the diaspora, during the Covid-19 pandemic, surviving the traumas of being a target of racism, and the challenges of being unable to return to her home country.

Separated from her homeland, Lâm's performance is both a tribute and a documentation of, in, and among the diaspora and her personal experiences as a "refugee". Having let her hair grow out during the four-year passage of time, she now cuts it for the audience to confront toxic stereotypes and hate crimes towards Asian women.

As the artist enacts the ritual of cutting and collecting the hair in a box, by using a pair of scissors that denote a personal history for her, she yearns to elicit emotive responses from the audience as she invites them to participate through the abstract form of language, history, and memory. More specifically, with her use of paper notes highlighting traumatic experiences, the presentation of some of her possessions, and fragments of a body that moves endlessly through space and time, Lâm shares a spiritual and highly charged, ephemeral instance with the viewer.

In the video documentation of the performance titled *I am not a spy* (2019), a precursor to *The Price of Humanity*, Lâm illustrates a traumatic encounter which took place in the United States during her experiences while living abroad. At the time of the incident, a Vietnamese American man accused her of being a communist spy and locked her in a room in his house in Massachusetts for a night. During her captivity, she wrote "*I am not a spy*" repeatedly in a notebook in an effort to stay sane by reaffirming the truth through written words; a survival tactic, and a poetic depiction of the tensions at play in the Vietnamese diasporic experience.

The performance took place in the deep south (Knoxville, Tennessee) where the artist covered the walls in black fabric, locked herself inside the space, and wrote the words "*I am not a spy*" all over the walls and floor, recording her actions with CCTV cameras, restricting audience members to the outside, but allowing them to peek through the windows and experience an opaque, yet emotional impression of an unsettling scene unfolding in front of them.

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# A.I.

Quỳnh Lâm (b.1988, Vietnam) is an interdisciplinary artist who is currently living & working between Bangkok and London. Lâm works in performance, installation, video, and mixed media. She is a winner of The 2021 American Austrian Foundation Seebacher Prize for Fine Arts; a recipient of the Special Jury Prize – 2019 Art Future Prize in Taiwan. She has exhibited work in Vietnam and abroad; including at The Factory Contemporary Arts Center in Ho Chi Minh City; The Vincom Center for Contemporary in Hanoi, Richard Koh Fine Art Gallery in Singapore, Museum of Contemporary Art in Nashville, Palazzo Costanzi Museum in Trieste and the Abbey of San Gallo in Moggio Udinese, Italy.