

ABOUT THE ARTIST



ABOUT JAROD LEW

Jarod Lew is a photographer who thinks about race, displacement, and memory. He has won many prizes, and his work is included in public and private collections around the world. Lew is originally from Metro Detroit and holds an MFA in photography from the Yale School of Art. This is his first solo exhibition in an art museum.

jarodlew.com

WHO IS VINCENT CHIN?

In the 1970s and 1980s, Detroit's economy was suffering due to a decline in the automotive industry. Auto workers lost their jobs, and they blamed Japanese car imports for their economic problems. At the same time, hate crimes against Asian Americans were on the rise. In 1982, Chinese-American Vincent Chin was beaten to death by two white auto workers who targeted him because he was Asian. Chin's death and subsequent court ruling—his murderers received no jail time—ignited Asian American activism in Detroit and a movement for Asian American civil rights throughout the United States. When Jarod Lew was in his twenties, he learned that his mother had been engaged to Vincent Chin.

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Cover Image: Jarod Lew, *Pikachu and Friends (Liana)*, 2022, archival pigment print, from the Please Take Off Your Shoes series. University of Michigan Museum of Art, Museum purchase made possible by Wayee Chu (Class of '97) and Ethan Beard, 2023/2.21. Digital image courtesy of the artist.
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SELF-GUIDED GALLERY ACTIVITY

JAROD LEW: STRANGE YOU NEVER KNEW



FEB 1 —
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Jarod Lew uses photography to try to better understand his multiple identities



Abu and Anna, 2023

PERSONAL IDENTITY

Photo Series: *Please Take Off Your Shoes*

The photographs in *Please Take Off Your Shoes* were made in Southeast Michigan and show Asian American families in their homes. Jarod Lew explores complicated feelings about home and belonging, as well as feelings of isolation, that many Asian Americans experience in the diaspora.

- ? Do you take off your shoes when you enter a house?
- ? Where would you take a photograph in your home to capture what it feels like?
- ? Who would be in it?



The Millers, 1952

REGIONAL IDENTITY

Photo Series: *Mimicry*

In *Mimicry*, Jarod Lew uses old photos he found at a white family's estate sale in Detroit. He changes the pictures by replacing the family's faces with his own, using humor to show how Asian people have been left out of Detroit's history. Some photos are unchanged, like the ones from a "Chinese-themed" party, revealing everyday experiences of racism.

- ? What does the word *mimicry* mean? How does that relate to these photographs and Jarod Lew's experience?
- ? If you were to insert yourself into a series of photographs, what would they look like (ex. sports teams, musical groups)?



Untitled (Mom on Couch), 2021

FAMILY IDENTITY

Photo Series: *In Between You and Your Shadow*

In these photos, Jarod Lew shares memories of growing up with his family. His mom doesn't like having her picture taken, but he still wanted to tell her story — she was once engaged to Vincent Chin, whose murder started an important fight for Asian American civil rights in Detroit. These photographs ask us to think about how we relate to and respect our loved ones and the past.

- ? What is one of your pivotal childhood memories?
- ? Is there a moment when you learned something about your family that surprised you or called you to question your beliefs?



The New Challengers Strike Back, 2024

COMMUNAL IDENTITY

The New Challengers Strike Back

On one monitor, you can play a custom-made level of *Street Fighter 2*, where you have 40 seconds to smash a car. On the other monitor, Jarod Lew shows video footage of Detroiters hitting a car with bats to "strike back" at job losses in the auto industry. These job losses were blamed on Japanese cars, fueling anti-Asian racism that led to violence, including the death of Vincent Chin.

- ? Describe how you feel about playing the video game after you learn that it is simulating reality.