

# eric firestone gallery

For Immediate Release:

## **GODZILLA: Echoes of the 1990s Asian American Arts Network**

Curated by Jennifer Samet

Pacita Abad • Diyan Achjadi • John Allen • Kim Anno • Todd Ayoung • Shelly Bahl  
• Rina Banerjee • Keiko Bonk • China Blue • Emily Cheng • Al-An deSouza • Uday  
Dhar • Skowmon Hastanan • Zhang Hongtu • Michi Itami • Yun-Fei Ji • Ik-Joong  
Kang • Betty Kano • Nina Kuo • Bing Lee • Colin Lee • Hung Liu • Stefani Mar •  
Kazuko Miyamoto • Helen Oji • An Pham • Debi Ray-Chaudhuri • Athena Robles •  
Barbara Takenaga • Rirkrit Tiravanija • Mary Ting • Rumiko Tsuda • Martin Wong •  
Tony Wong • Charles Yuen

Eric Firestone Gallery  
40 Great Jones Street and 4 Great Jones Street | New York, NY  
January 17 – March 16, 2023  
Opening Reception: Wednesday, January 17, 6:00–8:00PM

Eric Firestone Gallery is pleased to announce a major exhibition exploring the history of the Godzilla Asian American Arts Network, which was active in the 1990s. The exhibition will center the work of individual artists who were involved with the network at the time. Spanning across two gallery spaces, the show includes established artists and amplifies the voices of Asian American artists who have not been centered in the canon, and who made their careers showing in alternative spaces.

Godzilla founders – artists Bing Lee and Ken Chu, along with art historian Margo Machida – wanted to negotiate the visibility and representation of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the art world, and Godzilla functioned as a support structure and source of collective action.

As stated in Godzilla’s 1991 mission statement: “Godzilla is a New York-based group of Asian American visual artists and art professionals whose goal is to establish a dynamic forum that will foster information exchange, mutual support, documentation and networking among our expanding numbers across the United States.”

The original Godzilla movie was made in 1954 and reflects the devastation of atomic bombs



An Pham | *Miss Hanoi* | 1993  
mixed media  
113h x 64w x 4.5d in

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Diyan Achjadi | *At The Moment They Collided* | 2013  
ink, gouache, and silkscreen collage on paper  
22h x 30w in

launched at Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II. The monster Godzilla rose from nuclear waste, and its reptilian skin was intended to resemble keloid scars present on survivors of atomic bombing. This “anarchistic lizard,” as described by art historian Alice Yang, encapsulated the group’s simultaneous irreverence and serious reckoning with exclusionary policies and lack of representation in the art world.

Godzilla sought to resist the homogenous category of “Asian American” while also creating connections between Asian Americans of different backgrounds. As a result of its open membership policy and the popularity of its newsletter, Godzilla

reached over two thousand members nationwide by 1995. The newsletter was designed with punchy, eye-catching graphics, with a humorous and positive tone that surely was appealing to a wide audience. Gatherings ranged from loft parties, where food was brought and shared, to structured panels, presentations, and “slide slams.” This culminated in several group exhibitions organized by Godzilla members and committees.

These exhibitions are historically significant. The roster of artists in the current exhibition is drawn from those who showed in Godzilla-organized exhibitions. The 1991 exhibition at “Dismantling Invisibility,” curated by Ken Chu, included work that explored AIDS invisibility within the Asian American community. The “Curio Shop,” organized by Skowmon Hastanan, appropriated the idea of a Chinatown curio shop in order to confront the mainstream exoticization of Asian Americans and display the myriad cultural differences within the monolithic label Asian American.

The 2024 exhibition, while centered on a network, will ultimately look at individual artists and their unique voices, as well as stylistic development since the time of their involvement with Godzilla. It honors the open structure of Godzilla, allowing various themes to emerge without locating a single unified aesthetic.

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For further information, contact: [press@ericfirestonegallery.com](mailto:press@ericfirestonegallery.com)