

# Kim-Lee Kho

## **Burnt Offerings: Exhibition Statement**

**Grief is the shadow of love.**

**Grief is about loss, and we all lose someone, or many someones.**

In 2021 I lost my beloved father, during a pandemic that meant my family and I could not visit and care for him as we would have, as we longed to. I worried he would die of loneliness before anything else.

How many people experienced the grief he had, losing the company of loved ones? Losing actual, physical touch?

So when I decided to make a show around grief (and love and loss and longing, and the ephemerality of all things), I knew that most people could identify with the subject matter not just in the ordinary human sense, but with that special edge that pandemic conditions have added to everything.

Using photography in many different forms, along with other media, this show looks at the faces of grief, the weight of it, some specific practices around mourning, and poetic ways of looking at what I felt (feel) and lost, when I lost my father.

The title *Burnt Offerings* alludes to the ancient ritual of burning things whether as offering or sacrifice, as purification or as prayer.

You can expect to see images and elements of fire, charred surfaces and drawings produced by heat and flame, and photo-based sculpture that draws on the Chinese part of my heritage, along with many other points of contemplation.

Who or what have *you* lost? How do we mourn? How does grief change – and connect – us?

*Burnt Offerings* is part of the 2022 Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival.

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Kim-Lee Kho

Artist Statement:

## **My Father's Things**

*My Father's Things* is a series that creates an indirect portrait of my father, who passed away last year, by documenting his clothing and other personal effects.

The clothing he chose and wore, wore out even yet never discarded, is imbued with the memory of him, and the life he led while in them. Likewise the mundane articles that he collected, valued and used (or spent a lifetime planning to use).

The shirts presented in *View Find(H)er* are the launch of this new series and represent a departure from my usual, layered way of working. There is such rigour and discipline required of a tabletop photographer looking to document even the finest details, which, despite working against my nature, I needed for this work.

These pared-back, detailed images whisper, but they have a lot to say, especially in details like: vintage labels (from Canadian stores or garment industry that don't exist anymore), a broken button, worn collars, frayed edges, some hand-mending.

My father grew up in Indonesia during the Japanese occupation in WWII followed by the war for independence from Dutch colonial rule. Those experiences shaped him, making him frugal, and profoundly resistant to throwaway culture.

Perhaps in my drive to document his belongings, I have become his heir: the photographs a way for me to resist letting go of these items, imbued as they are with so many memories and associations, which cascade over me whenever I handle them.