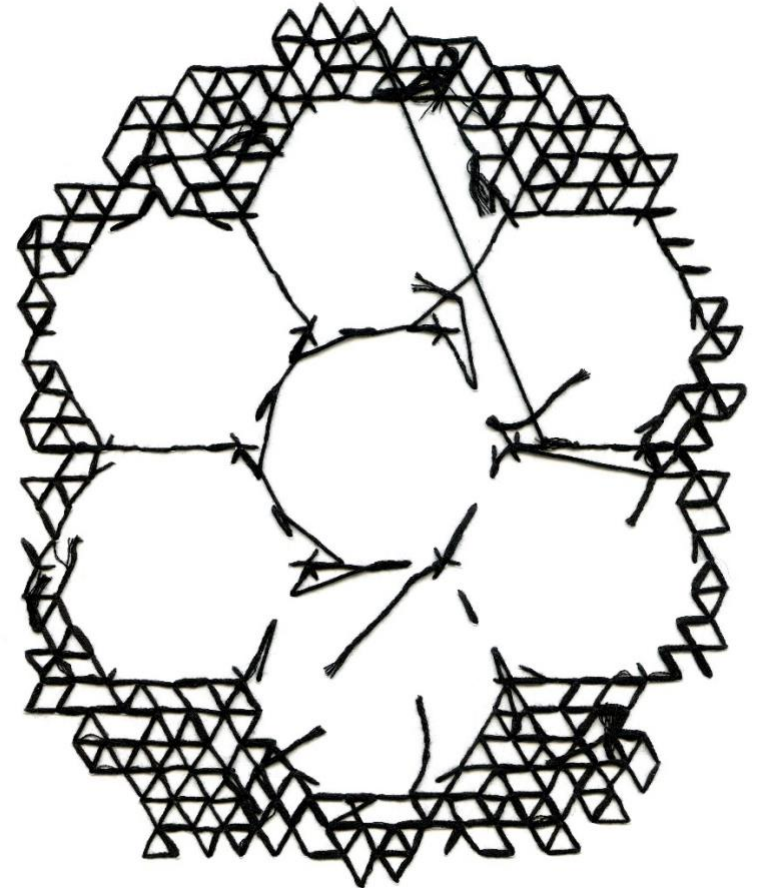


continued The new awareness that comes through art-ing brings broader awareness of my impact on others and has redefined how I view myself in my bi-racial marriage and as the mother of two mixed children. **WHITE OBLIVION** attempts to articulate the veil of whiteness that is so difficult to see from within its borders, while inspiring perspective and complex internal conversations about the ways that white people remain entangled and systemically held in place by their veil - in a similar way that humans are locked by the carved pathways of behavior related to personal trauma.

MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION



scan the art,
uncover the story



Tia Keobounpheng (Tia Keo) is a multidisciplinary artist living and working in North Minneapolis. She has spent much of her life exploring at the intersections of architecture, design, craft and art. With a BA degree in architecture from the University of MN, she co-founded Silvercocoon with her husband, Souliyahn, in 2001, launched her laser-cut jewelry collection in 2007, and expanded into illustration and sculpture in 2017. She is a 2017 and 2020 Artist Initiative Grantee from the MN State Arts Board and a 2018 Next Step Fund Grantee from the McKnight Foundation through the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council.

Cover photo credit: Tia Keobounpheng "100 Day Project: Measured Analog" (reverse) watercolor, pencil, thread on paper. 2020.

Tia Keobounpheng | DeFUSE

Duluth Art Institute | George Morrison Gallery

May - September 2021

*I make work that speaks to specific moments of clarity, often using basic materials and conflicting techniques that become a conversation between languages. Approaching art as a practice, this exhibition reflects my journey through the vital connection between daily practice and the rich layered work it inspires. As I seek a path beyond trauma's hold on my mind and body, **DeFUSE** identifies major forces on my mental health and reflects my attempts to address the pathways between extrinsic triggers and my intrinsic coping mechanisms. Is it possible to reverse the fusion between instincts that keep me tied to old ways? Through the process of cognitive defusion I hope to bring my own behavior patterns into context, differentiating between ideas and feelings in order to establish potential space for change. - Tia Keobounpheng*

100 Day Project: Measured Analog Inspired by my 4th grader's Montessori teacher during at home pandemic learning, I use geometry as a means to re-establish my connection to structure and order by recognizing my connection to the earth and natural order. Through measuring sacred geometry, pulling out a pattern in color, and stitching another pattern with thread, I allow for more than one "right way" and, with every stitch, reprogrammed my body to embrace my inherent nature. These pieces were completed alongside significant ancestral discovery that confirmed in my heart I am a descendant of the Sámi people in addition to being Finnish.

As I begin the journey of learning, feeling and grasping Sámi history, the exhibition culminates in two works in the new **WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE** series. This work dances through the in-between space of sacred geometry and my own geometry. The title reflects the complex push and pull between the self-critical voice inside my head and the honest, gentle questioning as I learn to trust my understanding of who I am at this point in my journey.

BAGGAGE, the **BLOODLINE** series, and the **FORCED/FORCE** series (all originating in 2018) reflect a personal need to acknowledge, in physical form, the deeply seeded and long buried feelings of psychological harm, disconnection (and epigenetic connection) to ancestors, and a recognition that my coping patterns were holding me in a state of denying my truest existence.

In a man's world, a woman's attempt at success is forced... measured by a man's standard, a system of laws, a definition of beauty, a permission granted or denied. We force ourselves to fit into a mold that was not made for us, was not crafted for our health or wellness or success. We are forced physically, psychologically, emotionally to conform to an idea of femininity in an environment that objectifies and does us harm...even if only by not understanding our true nature. Our successes exist within the confines of others' imaginations and trauma passes through us like vessels. Yet, we see what happens when we speak our truths - first to each other and then collectively. We are a **FORCE** when we unite together. The fifth iteration of **FORCED/FORCE** reflects a personal need to specifically acknowledge the role of psychological harm that leaves no physical scars - though it may manifest in physical ways over a lifetime. Subjecting the flat metal sheets to fire and extreme heat that alters the molecular make-up of the material symbolically reflects this internal alteration as it exists even in the copper plates that remain nearly flat. Additionally, the more intricate circular pattern of the installation reflects a bolder resilience than has existed in earlier expressions of this work.

ALLOWANCE expresses the tension one feels when undergoing personal change; the tension that comes with separating from old patterns while being unpracticed in new behaviors. How much of a new behavior is permitted before one retreats to the familiar? How much growth is permitted once the initial sense of freedom from identifying the source of coping patterns illuminates their impact and persistence?

"Physical, emotional, verbal, psychological trauma can be buried and forgotten but that does not mean it is benign—our bodies don't forget. We carry it with us as diligently as handbags and jewelry." -Tia Keo