

Minh Le

Major: Journalism and Graphic Design

Minor: N/A

Hometown: Hanoi, Vietnam

Title: Cọc—Cạch

(*Motherland*, Part I)

*Cọc cạch* is a Vietnamese adjective used to describe a pair of objects that lack symmetry. They clash. They're lopsided. Like a pair of uneven chopsticks, they're meant to match, but they don't. When one half is missing, the other half seeks a replacement to retain their wholeness. That's how I've learned to recall memories.

My inspiration comes from *unpacking* the luggage in which I crammed my life when moving to America from Vietnam. Eight thousand, one hundred and sixty-some miles in more or less sixteen hours. I exaggerate the differences between similar memories to better remember them. Some are paired up for no apparent reason, while others are split in two—a product of interruptions in-between two spaces and two time zones.

Drawn from memories, both real and imagined, this series of prints put together everyday encounters from my life back in Vietnam. My late grandmother's half-kitchen, half-bedroom bower, a relic of late-1970s government-assigned housing. The backseat of my father's *Yamaha*, which grew increasingly cramped as my brother and I grew older. The millisecond when the last droplet of water falls from a grain of rice after rinsing. I'm putting them together, still trying to figure out the right combination, if there even is one.

Doing so, I revisited *Đông Hồ* painting, a line of Vietnamese folk art originating in a craft village in the northern region of Vietnam. Printed with woodblocks on *điệp* paper, *Đông Hồ* paintings depict folk allegories and symbols of good luck. I set out to reimagine elements of *Đông Hồ* paintings—be they aesthetic value or social philosophies—with my printmaking practice. A combination of ink and *chine collé*, cutouts and blind embossing, shadows and

engraving, this series of works uses abstraction to render the loosely defined nature of my memories. They're jumbled, worn, and yet ever so clear.