

New Spencer Museum exhibition explores grief, memory and belonging | Arts & Culture

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The newest installation at the Spencer Museum of Art, “My Mother’s Tongue Ties Me Together,” displays three local artists’ journeys through concepts of grief, collective memory and belonging.

Featured artists Noelle Choy, Hùng Lê and Merry Sun were [awarded](#) Charlotte Street Visual Artist Awards and will have their work displayed in the exhibition until Jan. 4, 2026. The awards are given to visual artists in the Kansas City area and include a cash grant along with the opportunity to have their work exhibited at a local venue.

The exhibition features complex sculptures, interactive sound elements, video projects and intricate textiles from the three artists to convey their complex feelings, backgrounds and lives. The title of the exhibition refers to the cultures we come from, the languages our mothers speak around us as we grow up and how those languages tie us together.

Choy's collection features a sculpture constructed of a hollowed out hemlock tree stump showcasing various hidden forms of communication inside. Screenshots, advertisements and text messages are placed inside the tree stump hidden from immediate view.

"[This piece] is a reference point for love, loss and everything in between," Choy said.

The rest of Choy's collection features a 33-minute video installation showcasing her relationships with her family and collective memory across generations, a sculpture of collected artifacts Choy's mother left behind after her passing, and various other sculptures.



"When We Were Fish (大舅)" is a 2025 work by artist Merry Sun.
Ashley Phelps / The Kansan

Sun's collection includes a large, sound-interactive sculpture that is centered inside the gallery. The complex base of the sculpture is a nod to historical Chinese architecture. A string of terracotta tiles is suspended above the sculpture. As the viewer walks around the architecture, the terracotta tiles create an interactive sound effect, adding depth to the work.



Detail of "Trở Lại Về Bờ," 2025, by artist Hùng Lê. Lê's work explores the concept of home.
Ashley Phelps / The Kansan

Lê's work includes intricate textile pieces and a 13-minute video installation. All of Lê's pieces feature an overlay of Vietnamese-inspired patterns. The video explores everyday life in Vietnam while the textiles challenge and question the concepts of home.

"What constitutes a home when our loved ones are no longer there?" Lê asks.

The Spencer Museum of Art is open Tuesday through Sunday. For more information on viewing the exhibition, visit the museum's [website](#).

Kyiah Ullmann is a senior majoring in journalism and mass communications. She primarily covers pop culture and event stories.

This article was edited by Arts & Culture Editor Isabella Johnson. If the information in this article needs to be corrected, please contact isabella.johnson@ku.edu. We want to hear from you!