

‘Right on!’ outdoor exhibit at Museum of Boulder shines a light on justice

Boulder artist responds to social crisis and systemic racism with 32 plaques, which are all for sale



Artist Angie Eng installs plaques from her outdoor exhibit “Right on!” on the railing outside of the Museum of Boulder, at 2205 Broadway, in Sept. 2020. (Don Murray/ Courtesy photo)

By **KALENE MCCORT** | kmccort@prairiemountainmedia.com | Boulder Daily Camera
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Installed on the [Museum of Boulder’s](#) outer railing, visitors will notice 12-by-12 inch square wood paintings — each a different skin tone shade — featuring a specific calendar date. The featured days displayed on each plaque correspond with incredibly notable and some more under-the-radar civil rights cases and historical events. [“Right on!”](#) is an interactive outdoor exhibit that was completed in just one month, and it aims to educate, engage and spark discussions around justice.



Artist Angie Eng holds one of her plaques whose date corresponds with the Patriot Act. "Right on!" features 32 plaques commemorating historic American events or cases. (Noah Anast/ Courtesy photo)

"I wanted to respond to our social crisis and systemic racism," said artist Angie Eng, director of cultural nonprofit Creative Catalyzers and creator of the outdoor exhibit. "I felt with the state of our democracy, marching and signing petitions would not be enough for social change like it was 50 to 60 years ago."

Once scanned with a smartphone, a QR code on each of the 32 plaques will bring up more information about each case and event dating back to as far as the 1860s up until today.

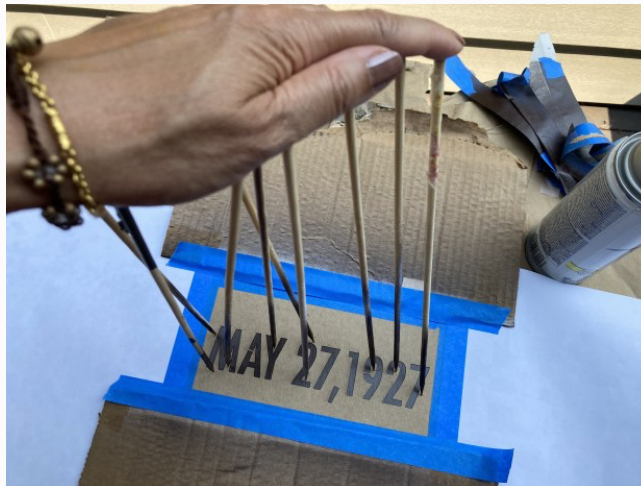
"As an educator and artist, I felt I should channel my anger, frustration and sadness over the divided state of our society by using my best toolkit — visual art and teaching," Eng said.

Inspired by the work of the late Japanese conceptual artist On Kawara, Eng pays homage to his "Today" series that featured thousands of paintings, each inscribed with the date that they were started and completed.

For Kawara, the date was the sole focus and inspiration behind each painting. It was meant to gain relevance when seen by a viewer — as they could recount their own personal memories with it.

In Eng's work, featured dates correspond with everything from The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 to 1954's *Brown v. the Board of Education* and the codes steer onlookers online to learn more.

"I want questions to come up for each visitor," Eng said. "Do I know the other's history?' 'Do I concern myself with justice that applies to only my own identity?' 'Why didn't I learn that historical date in school?' I want visitors to recognize that justice for one group is justice for all people and therefore injustice for one group is injustice for all of us if we claim to be American."



Angie Eng makes one of the plaques for "Right on!," an outdoor exhibit at the Museum of Boulder.
(Angie Eng/ Courtesy photo)

Dates of The Fair Housing Act, *Roe v. Wade* and The Patriot Act are among those displayed on the paintings that range in color from ivory to ebony hues.

"Although the project was a response to systemic racism, I wanted to use a wider lens and address injustice in our history of different groups by gender, sex, ethnicity, immigration, class, disability and Indigenouness," Eng said. "I chose some very obvious important landmark civil justice cases and also some lesser-known cases."

The squares, which will be on display until Nov. 4, are all for sale. Fifty percent of the proceeds will benefit the ACLU and Creative Catalyzers.

"Potential buyers are small, as well as large collectors of contemporary art, and who also support political art," Eng said. "I hope to mobilize Boulderites to support local artists and organizations that are using their leadership and creativity to advocate for

a more caring, politically aware and culturally rich community. And, I also hope a museum picks up a part of the collection since it is not only historical, but also reflects my generation of appropriation artists.”

Fusing a history lesson with an installation that holds much mystery at first glance, the exhibit shines a light on the fact that homosexuality was classified as a mental disorder up until 1987 and that as recent as 1990 people could be denied employment based on not being fully able-bodied.

“Eng’s work is particularly moving as a reminder that the history of civil rights affects everyone — of every shade, as she represents in her paint colors — and that it affects every day of the year, as well,” said Amelia Brackett Hogstad, exhibitions coordinator at the Museum of Boulder. “To me, seeing dates laid out through time without much initial context is a reminder that even if you personally don’t know the breadth of civil rights history of the United States, it’s all around you, you just have to dig a little to find it.”

While each plaque is rather small in scale and doesn’t display incredibly detailed work, its power is rooted in subtlety.

“It’s a deceptively simple goal, but I hope people learn something that they weren’t expecting to learn — for example, that the U.S. passed a law literally called the ‘Chinese Exclusion Act,’” Hogstad said. “I hope that people are intrigued and decide to learn more on their own about the effects of that law and others that Eng highlights.”



Wooden painted plaques by Angie Eng, part of the pieces in her exhibit “Right on!” that will be displayed on the exterior of the Museum of Boulder through Nov. 4 (Angie Eng/ Courtesy photo)

This fall, Museum of Boulder will unveil “Drawing Parallels” — an exhibit that will capture historical and current events, stories and art of Boulder. Opening Oct. 30, the vast collection will include contemporary perspectives on 2020 from local creatives, frontline workers and community members.

“We name and recognize our need as an organization to better reflect the diversity of Boulder and to create and implement an evaluation framework so that the Museum can measure and improve our community outreach strategies,” said Lori Preston, executive director of Museum of Boulder. “Angie’s (Eng’s) “Right On” is right on, in my opinion. I hope people will start by coming by and taking advantage of this free exhibit on our parameter, and then move inside for an even more in-depth snapshot of Boulder.”