

Katy Wong
Drawing I

Artist Statement

For our final sketchbook project, I chose to base my drawings on the topic of coronavirus and how it's affecting society at this current moment. When most people think of coronavirus, it's safe to say that one of the first words they think of is "China" or "Chinese" since the virus was first reported in Wuhan, China. As a Chinese American, I chose to highlight the issue of hate rhetoric and hate crimes around the world due to coronavirus, which has caused an increase in racism geared towards not only Chinese people, but also anyone who looks East Asian. Since January, there have been about 75 Asian American and Pacific Islander hate crimes documented in the United States ranging from statements like "Go back to China" and using racial slurs to violent attacks including being spat on and physical assault. These are just cases that have been reported to the police — Asian discrimination is happening everywhere everyday. It also doesn't help that our very own president has a role in spreading this fear by calling it the "Chinese virus."

With my drawings, I wanted to represent different ages and Asian cultures to convey how every Asian person is dealing with the impacts of coronavirus discrimination, not just Chinese people. I chose to draw face masks on each individual not only to symbolize coronavirus, but also how Asian people often feel like they have to "wear a mask" in public now to avoid racist attacks. The name of my project is titled "mask" to showcase this feeling of wanting to be hidden and out of sight as an Asian living during the time of coronavirus. The medium I used was graphite pencil and acrylic for the title and back cover because I wanted the drawings to look simple while also holding a powerful meaning. Since half of the people's faces are covered in masks, I made sure to make each person's eyes stand out and give off a feeling of sadness and shame, which is how a lot of Asian Americans are feeling today. I also used different eye shapes since Asian eyes come in all shapes and sizes, contrary to the stereotype that Asians "all look the same." For the age range, I chose a middle-aged man, toddler, elderly woman, and a young woman. For the different cultures, I left the people's Asian backgrounds ambiguous to further convey how not all Asians are Chinese. I also drew an Asian woman wearing a hijab because there are actually many people in Asia that are muslim, though this is something not many people realize. Asia is a melting pot of different cultures, which is the main point I wanted to show with the different people.

The last few panels are the aftermath of the Asian discrimination, with people holding signs and protesting that their ethnicity isn't a virus. I knew I wanted to include this in the end because it gives a sense of hope and pride for Asians that are struggling right now.