

CINDY HUANG

Offering

Te Whare Toi o Heretaunga Hastings Art Gallery
Heretaunga Hastings
19.10.2024–01.02.2025

by Rosie Dawson-Hewes



Cindy Huang's *Offering* sits on a round black dais, floating just above the floor. Bronze-cast citrus peels and apple cores, ripe with patina, are arranged across its surface. The ashen remains of daily votive incense burnings sit in small piles, the smoky scent of fruit and sandalwood filling the air.

Drawn to its level, my body assumes the crouched position of the Wattie's workers I often see harvesting vegetables on my commute. Huang's work regularly draws its viewers toward the earth, into closer relationship with the source of our sustenance, and *Offering* is no different. It explores the mostly invisible story of Chinese market gardeners in Te Matau-a-Māui, their influence in this region and its bounty—both horticultural and financial. The fruit used for the casts was bought at the Chinese-owned Onekawa Fruit Shop, then given to Huang's friends to consume. Their traces linger, in the shape of each peel, the size of each core. The workers who grew and picked the fruit, however, remain imperceptible. The longer I observe the work, the louder my desk-

job body's discomfort becomes, until I start to feel the toll of the toil I cannot see.

As I drive home, incense clinging to my clothes, I consider my daily offerings. Recipes and garden crops swapped with neighbours; and the island benchtop at work, an ever-changing seasonal shrine to my colleagues' sustainability and generosity—stone fruit and tomatoes, feijoas and citrus, no excess is wasted.

Huang's work reminds me to appreciate these everyday moments of nourishment, community and connection—they are the true offerings found in our food, and the lives of those who grow it.

Cindy Huang, *Offering*. Installation view, Te Whare Toi o Heretaunga Hastings Art Gallery, November 2024. Courtesy of the artist