

Series 1: Trades of the Street

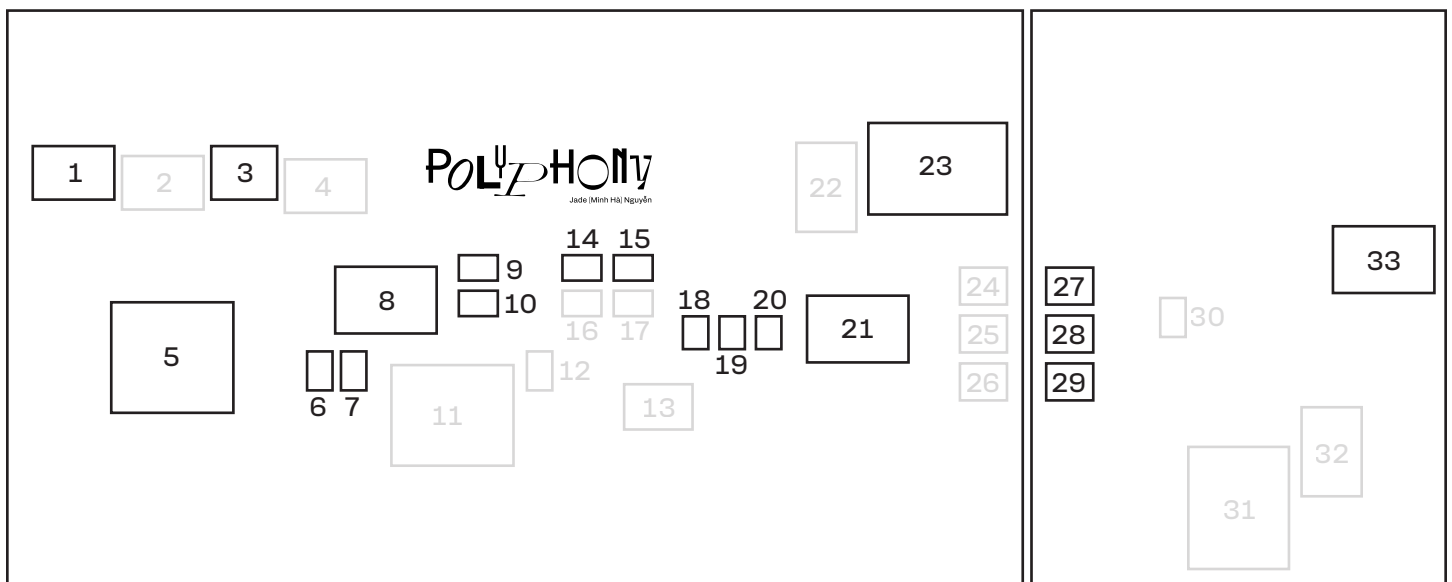
Trades of the Street is a photographic series on traditional markets in Việt Nam that provides an intimate perspective on the robust regional productions and the highly interpersonal, communitarian commercial practices exist in many Southeast Asian communities. The series embrace the lyrical mode of photography that utilizes dynamic lines, motion blur, and skewed perspective to amplify the sense of movement, life, and ephemerality in public spaces. The photographs speak to not only the physical appearance of the market but also the experience of immersing oneself into the Vietnamese everyday life full of sounds, smells, textures, patterns, colors, movements, and energy. There is a certain rhythm to the market that one can get used to, a certain predictability in chaos that is only achievable after a period of observation and familiarity.

During my trips to the market, I was mesmerized by the vibrant energy flowing through vendors in the form of amiable chatters and growling motorbikes. The instantaneous nature of modern photography allowed me to capture fleeting pockets of life that burst through narrow sidewalks and makeshift beachside stalls full of sumptuous goods, crinkled money, and passing shadows. As a Saigon local, I find great comfort in the market's cacophony and my photographs portray the market as a beautifully orchestrated chaos where communities are formed through habitual conversations and everyone, regardless of wealth or social status, can have equal access to a fresh diet, confuting the myth of Asian wet markets portrayed in Western media.

All images are archival pigment prints.

Locations where photographs are taken:

1. District 8, Hồ Chí Minh city
3. District 8, Hồ Chí Minh city
5. District 8, Hồ Chí Minh city
6. Phan Thiết, Bình Thuận
7. Phan Thiết, Bình Thuận
8. District 8, Hồ Chí Minh city
9. Phan Thiết, Bình Thuận
10. Phan Thiết, Bình Thuận
14. District 5, Hồ Chí Minh city
15. District 5, Hồ Chí Minh city
18. Phan Thiết, Bình Thuận
19. Phan Thiết, Bình Thuận
20. Phan Thiết, Bình Thuận
21. Hoàn Kiếm, Hà Nội
23. District 8, Hồ Chí Minh city
27. Mũi Né, Bình Thuận
28. District 8, Hồ Chí Minh city
29. District 8, Hồ Chí Minh city
33. District 5, Hồ Chí Minh city



Series 2: Commerce(d) Culture

Commerce(d) Culture is photographic series on the consumer culture in Vietnamese grocery stores across the United States that explores the intersection of consumption and cultural practices in diasporic communities. The series dominantly employs the static mode of photography, using sharp lines, right angles, and centered subjects to emphasize the sense of meditateness I experienced while being in these stores as an international student trying to (re)connect with her culture by going to Vietnamese spaces and finding comfort in the familiar. Many of the subjects depicted are of popular packaged goods that I rarely acknowledged back home, but the fact that they travelled half the world to be here, and so did I, holds great significance. Through photography, objects take on a new life and became vessels of memories they never lived through.

For many people in the diaspora community, shopping at these stores fulfills a craving for more than just items on the shelves. From Little Saigon in Southern California to Philadelphia and smaller towns of rural Illinois, these stores range from local corner shops to larger multi-aisle supermarkets, attracting thousands to millions of shoppers of cultural nostalgia or exploration. These spaces are where diasporic communities can shop for the ingredients that they use in their everyday cooking and have the privilege of doing a quick grocery run without the constant reminder that they are aliens in the communal spaces they inhabit. The stores exist not only as a place of transaction but also a celebration of intercultural communities, an exhibition of the immigrants' experience, and a construct of nationhood.

All images are archival pigment prints.

Locations where photographs are taken:

- 2. Peoria, Illinois
- 4. Champagne, Illinois
- 11. Little Saigon, California
- 12. Little Saigon, California
- 13. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- 16. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- 17. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- 22. Little Saigon, California
- 24. Champagne, Illinois
- 25. Champagne, Illinois
- 26. Peoria, Illinois
- 30. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- 31. Champagne, Illinois
- 32. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

