

*Remember This:
Hung Liu at Trillium*



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©Anne Rose Kitagawa, JSMA, University of Oregon
(on view 5 February - 28 August 2022)

Chinese-born American artist Hung Liu (劉虹, 1948-2021) explored subjects ranging from still life imagery to portraiture and landscape in innovative works that reflect upon history, memory, tradition, migration, and social justice. Characterized by layers of luminous color, drips, and Zen *ensō*-like circles that mark the passage of time, she focused with insight and compassion on the forgotten—elevating and imparting dignity and individuality on the poor, the afflicted, and the displaced. Although originally trained as a Socialist Realist artist, Liu employed gestural brushstrokes and filmy washes that lend her works a poetic, almost dreamlike quality—the antithesis of the rigorous propaganda style required during her youth in China.

Hung Liu lived through the chaos before, during, and after China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-76) and in 1984 she relocated to the U.S. to study at UC San Diego, where she was advised by pioneering artist and theorist Allan Kaprow (1927-2006). Oscillating between the poles of Communist propaganda and the western avant-garde, she found her unique artistic voice. A beloved professor at Mills College for 24 years, Liu created an immense body of profound, redemptive, immediately recognizable works that have inspired and uplifted generations. The recipient of several fellowships, grants, and awards, she has been featured in over 100 exhibitions and her art is included in many major public and private collections.

In 2003, Hung Liu began collaborating with master printer David Salgado (1948-2018) at Trillium Graphics in Brisbane, CA. Together, they developed an elaborate process to create mixed-media works combining aspects of painting, printmaking, and photography that allowed Liu to revisit and enhance elements from her paintings and embed them in layers of translucent resin. The result was a prize-winning new kind of shimmering hybrid art. After 15 years of innovation, Liu and Salgado generously donated a legacy collection of 55 such mixed-media works to the JSMA. Tragically, both of them have since passed on, but their combined creativity and largesse are celebrated in this special exhibition.

Remember This: Hung Liu at Trillium was curated by JSMA Chief Curator of Collections and Asian Art and Director of Academic Programs Anne Rose Kitagawa in memory of Hung Liu, David Salgado, and Erb Bigelow. The JSMA extends profound thanks to Liu's husband, Jeff Kelley, gallerists Tonya Turner Carroll & Michael Carroll, and Nancy Salgado and Matt Pipes of Trillium Graphics for their extremely generous encouragement, collaboration, and support. This exhibition and its related publication and programs were made possible with generous support from the Coeta and Donald Barker Changing Exhibitions Endowment and JSMA members.

BIOGRAPHY:

Hung Liu's youth coincided with one of the most tumultuous periods of Chinese history. She was born in 1948 in Changchun, Jilin province. Soon thereafter, her father was imprisoned in a Communist labor camp. After surviving the Great Leap Forward (1958-62) and the resulting catastrophic famine, Liu and her mother moved to Beijing, where she was able to attend grade school, but did not receive a diploma because of the upheaval caused by the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-76). In 1968, she was sent to the countryside to be "reeducated" by working among peasants. Four years later, when schools began to reopen, Liu was able to attend Beijing Teachers College and hosted a television program teaching art to the masses. In 1979, she entered the prestigious Central Academy of Fine Arts, where she specialized in mural painting and took several trips to the Gobi Desert to study the Buddhist cave paintings at Dunhuang.

After coming to the U.S. in 1984 to study art at UC San Diego, Hung Liu expanded her subject matter and loosened her painting style. Her transnational status encouraged empathy for immigrants and others on the periphery and inspired her to delve into the complex and often troubling history of intercultural exchange between China and the west.

ENGAGEMENT with PHOTOGRAPHY

Raised at a time when most photographs were destroyed for political reasons, Hung Liu came to view such images as precious keepsakes. Her mother sought to document aspects of Liu's early life in photos. When Liu was sent to the countryside in 1968, she was asked to safeguard a friend's camera, which she used to document the lives of the peasants she befriended. After coming to the U.S., Liu studied nineteenth- and early twentieth-century photographs, some shot by Europeans and Americans who exoticized Chinese people and customs for their intended western audience, and others of an official or pornographic nature created by and for Chinese elites. In most cases, Liu was struck by the powerlessness and objectification of those early Chinese subjects, who were treated more like specimens than people. She began to incorporate figures from historic photos into her paintings with the intent of uplifting and empowering those unknown prostitutes, prisoners, refugees, and laborers by surrounding them with auspicious motifs derived from traditional Chinese paintings, textiles, and books.

A second way in which Hung Liu engaged with photography is at play in all of these colorful mixed-media works since she and David Salgado "sampled" digital images of her paintings, earlier Chinese art, and historic photographs to use as the raw source material to modify and enhance. In order to demonstrate their process, they thoughtfully donated works that showcase their jazz-like ability to reproduce, enlarge, or minimize existing compositions, and to add, subtract, reverse, or combine motifs.

MIXED-MEDIA (*Za Zhong*) TECHNIQUE

“In a traditional print, all the layers (of whatever the media) are on top of one another. That is to say, each color of a print is printed as a separate layer. A twenty-color print has twenty layers. In Hung Liu’s *Za Zhong* pieces, each mounted in a wooden box, the layers are separated by 1/8 inch of resin. Like the progeny of paintings, these works begin with a digital base image sampled from the artist’s own oeuvre, an iris print that is then coated with wax in the areas the artist wants to retain. The rest of the image is washed away with water. This allows Liu to redraw her image, alter it, and transform it from the original painting source, setting the stage for the subsequent layers of cast resin, painting in oil or in ink, collage elements from historical sources or from the artist’s own paintings. Thus, each *Za Zhong* takes on a life of its own. Each is unique.

Once the original subject matter is sealed in resin, Liu may paint a bird or flower or dragon, and include some of her signature gestures and shapes, and then layer with resin. Printed collage elements may also be added. The resin is cast on top of the paint or ink, enhancing its colors and providing a translucent source of light and then the artist begins to lay in other images or washes or shapes. The paint and resin layers cycle as many as six times or as few as two. The artist does not pre-determine the number of layers she will apply. The process is organic and particular to each of the *Za Zhongs*.

The final layer is always one of resin. Once this is dry, Liu paints the edges of the wooden box in color, usually red or yellow. On the sides of some of the *Za Zhongs*, she writes a poem or couplet in Chinese characters, echoing the tradition of signposts used in China outside the home.

Voluptuous in appearance, filled with light and shimmer, the *Za Zhong* works break new territory for the artist as she honors her traditional subject matter of women and historical images from China.”*

- David Salgado, 2007

*David Salgado, “The *Za Zhong* Series” in Nancy Hoffman Gallery, **Hung Liu ZZ (Bastard Paintings)**, 2007.



Hung Liu died of pancreatic cancer on August 7, 2021. A towering figure in the world of contemporary art and a mentor to generations of students, she had two major U.S. exhibitions in the works at the time of her passing: ***Hung Liu: Golden Gate*** at the DeYoung Museum in San Francisco (through August 7, 2022) and ***Hung Liu: Portraits of Promised Lands*** at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington D.C. (through May 30, 2022). Soon the Oakland Museum opened the ***Remembering Artist Hung Liu*** (through October 31, 2022) in which some of her most recent paintings are juxtaposed with photographs by Dorothea Lange.

American artist Carrie Mae Weems has written:

*... Liu tells a fairy tale rarely heard and seldom seen. Her paintings, breathtaking in their beauty, use unsurpassed skill to reveal the push of a people caught in the turmoil of upheaval, people trapped by the oppressive systems meant to control. Whether exploring conditions of women and children, the brutality of the Cultural Revolution, of the collapse of American feudalism, Liu's paintings humanize the lives of everyday people.**

The JSMA honors Hung Liu's transcendent genius, unshakable fortitude, and immense generosity of spirit and we deeply miss her.

*Carrie Mae Weems, "Artists' Reflections" in National Portrait Gallery *Hung Liu: Portraits of Promised Lands* (Smithsonian Institution, 2021), p. 179.

BARKER GALLERY:



Hung LIU (LIU Hung 劉虹, Chinese-born American, 1948-2021)

Mother, Daughter and River, 2016

Mixed media, 23 x 41 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.48

Hung Liu based this haunting work on an image taken by Swiss photographer Emil Schulthess (1913-1996) of women pulling a boat up the Li River. Liu isolated the figures from the original background, lifting the mother and daughter out of their specific place and time (southwest China in the 1950s), making their toil seem eternal, like the myth of Sisyphus. One of many works Hung Liu created of anonymous figures doing manual labor, this composition was the subject of her monumental 1997 oil painting *Mu Nu (Mother and Daughter)*, now in the collection of the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City, Missouri. In this smaller, mixed-media version, Liu maintains the “weeping realism” of her original painting, with its distinctive drips of linseed-oil that seem to dissolve the image, but she adds flower petals and colored circles that lend a heavenly air.

Section I – History:



Hung LIU (LIU Hung 劉虹, Chinese-born American, 1948-2021)

Heart II, 2012

Mixed media, 60 x 41 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.24

Hung Liu incorporated imagery from traditional Chinese medical texts into her work beginning in the 1980s (such as in the numerous pieces she created in response to the 1989 June Fourth demonstrations in Tiananmen Square). In this 2012 mixed-media work, illustrations concerning the human heart are superimposed over a portrait of a beautiful young woman, which she further enlivened with a quirky bird derived from paintings by the eccentric artist Bada Shanren (circa 1626-1705).



Hung LIU (LIU Hung 劉虹, Chinese-born American, 1948-2021)

White Rice Bowl, 2014

Mixed media, 60 x 60 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.39

Hung Liu based this monumental work of a child with bound feet tenderly feeding her younger brother on a nineteenth century image by photographer Frank Cannaday. In 1997, she created an oil painting on this theme, but this mixed-media version deviates from the more prosaic background of the painting with the addition of swaths of pure color, Zen *ensō*-like colored circles, and strange, briskly rendered flowers and pheasants derived from the eccentric Chinese painter Bada Shanren (circa 1626-1705).



Hung LIU (LIU Hung 劉虹, Chinese-born American, 1948-2021)

Tribute, 2007

Mixed media, 41 x 41 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.54

Against a shimmering golden background, a saffron-robed Buddhist monk or *arhat* (Chinese *luohan*) with exaggerated features and fanciful robes, offers flowers to a child with a partially shaven head and top knots who eats from a red-and-white porcelain bowl. Auspicious plants and colorful circles percolate through the composition, which is based on an oil painting Liu made in 2002.



Hung LIU (LIU Hung 劉虹, Chinese-born American, 1948-2021)

All the Ancestors, 2011

Mixed-media triptych, 60 x 100 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.17a-c

This luminous work features the three-quarter profile of a young girl wreathed with Daoist peaches of immortality. Her face is superimposed over an elaborate Confucian ancestor portrait with rows of hundreds of seated figures representing generations of a family lineage. On either side are golden panels decorated with dripping pigment, stylized flowers, and colored circles.

The girl's face is based on a photographic portrait that Hung Liu made of a peasant she befriended during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). (That image is on display on the opposite wall with other photos taken by Liu when she worked in the countryside from 1968-72.)





Hung LIU (LIU Hung 劉虹, Chinese-born American, 1948-2021)

Four Kings, 2012

Mixed-media diptych, 36 x 119 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.20a,b

This complex work begins at right with the profile of a woman with elaborate upswept hair derived from nineteenth-century portraits of Chinese “types” by western photographers John Thomson (Scottish, 1837-1921) and Wilhelm Burger (Austrian, 1844-1920). She is superimposed over the mirror image of a section of a Qiu Ying (1494-1552) handscroll entitled *Ten Views of the Wangchuan Villa*, which is now in the Jinlin Museum in Changchun. The composition continues to the left with formal seated portraits of three Chinese emperors based on paintings in the National Palace Museum in Taipei. From right to left are Ming Emperor Yongle (1360-1424) in yellow, along with white-robed Emperor Taizu (927-976) and red-clad Emperor Renzong (1010-1063), both of the Song dynasty (960-1279). The images of Renzong and Yongle have been reversed, perhaps to create a sense of conversation between the figures. At far left is a monkey derived from a Japanese Maruyama Shijō-style painting by Mori Sosen (1747-1821). Hung Liu’s entire work is enlivened by birds, butterflies, and flowers from various traditional Chinese paintings, and her characteristic brushed Zen *ensō*-like circles. She and master printer David Salgado (1948-2018) did multiple experiments using some of the same pictorial elements, which are also visible in the 2012 mixed-media work *Dynasties*, currently on view in the Soreng Gallery.



Hung LIU (LIU Hung 劉虹, Chinese-born American, 1948-2021)

Full Circle, 2008

Mixed media with snuff bottle, 26 x 24 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.2a,b

This profile of a mature Cantonese woman with elaborate upswept hair was based on an anthropological portrait published in 1873 by the Scottish photographer John Thomson (1837-1921). When Hung Liu first encountered such exoticized imagery by western photographers, she was shocked to see how Chinese people were categorized as “types” rather than individuals, and she set about restoring the dignity of the sitters by creating lavish, self-possessed likenesses.



Hung LIU (LIU Hung 劉虹, Chinese-born American, 1948-2021)

Portrait of a Young Man, Female Factory Worker [3/4 view], 2018

Prints (based on original drawings, circa 1972-75); ink on paper, 13 ½ x 11 ¼ inches (each)

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:45.3, 2018:45.1, 2018:45.2



In her youth, Hung Liu was trained to produce Socialist Realist propaganda, and spent time sketching appropriate Communist subjects and backgrounds from life, since artists were discouraged from using photographs as sources for their imagery.



Mixed-media works based on Hung Liu photographs taken in the countryside (circa 1968-72), most of approximate height 13 ½ inches

Top Row:

Village Portrait: Peasant Soldier, 2013, edition 1/9, 2018:25.34

Village Portrait: Painting Landscape, 2012, edition 5/9, 2018:25.30

Village Portrait: Old Uncle, 2012, edition 5/9, 2018:25.28

Middle Row:

Grandma - progressive, 2012, 2018:25.52

Grandma, 2012, edition 8/27, 2018:25.32

Village Portrait: Little Swan, 2012, edition 5/9, 2018:25.26

Bottom Row:

Village Portrait: The Broken Bridge, 2012, 2018:25.53

Village Portrait: Children of the Water, 2012, edition 5/9, 2018:25.27

Village Portrait: His Mightiness, 2012, edition 1/9, 2018:25.35

In 1968, Hung Liu was one of over 10 million urban youths sent to the countryside to be “reeducated” by peasants. For four years, she worked from dawn until dusk tending rice and corn. However, she was asked to safeguard a friend’s camera, which she used to make portraits and document the lives of the peasants she befriended. Displayed here are nine mixed-media works based on some of those photos.



Communism is the Truth I, 2011

Mixed media, 41 x 41 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.16

In this mixed-media work, Hung Liu combined the figures of two rapturous dancers from the Communist propaganda ballet *Red Detachment of Women* (*Hongse niangzijun*) with a frenetic landscape in the style of Wang Meng (1308-1395). In this piece, the red circle hovering above the figures' heads refers not just to the sun, but to Mao Zedong (1893-1976), the founder of the People's Republic of China, by virtue of the slogan "Chairman Mao is the Red Sun in Our Hearts" (*Mao zhuxi shi women xinzhong de hong tai yang*). The *Red Detachment of Women* was the most famous of the Eight Model Plays sanctioned by the Chinese government during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-76) and tells the story of a poor peasant girl who lived on Hainan Island during the Chinese Civil War (1927-36) and joined the Communist Party's fight against feudalism.



Sentencing Day, 2012

Mixed media, 41 x 60 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.23

Raised during a period when propaganda underscored the heroism of Chinese Communists during the power struggles against Chinese Nationalist (Kuomintang, or KMT) forces and then against the Japanese during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), Hung Liu produced moving works based on historic photographs as well as dramatic portrayals in books, movies, and plays. This moving work faithfully reproduces a photograph of three Communist supporters left behind by the party and subsequently captured by the Kuomintang. Liu surrounds the somber figures with butterflies and Zen *ensō*-like circles, though in this case the three circles are red, and positioned to suggest the firing squad these women would ultimately face. The same female prisoners appear in Liu's 2000 oil painting *Comrades in Arms* (private collection) and the 2006 painting *Called Home*.

Section II - Crisis:



Women in the War - Comfort Women II, 2008

Mixed-media diptych, 41 x 86 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.6a,b

Hung Liu uses veils of dripping pigment to metaphorically cleanse the victims of history. This example commemorates the devastating toll paid by the women who were forced to serve as sexual slaves to Japanese soldiers during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-45). Based on a historic photograph, Liu surrounds the figures, whose expressions range from anger to fear, resignation, and despair, with colored circles, a fish, and butterflies superimposed over Japanese swords (weapons that were present in the original photo). At upper left can be seen a branch of persimmons, perhaps the bitter fruit referenced in the title of Liu's monumental painting on the same subject, *Strange Fruit* (named after the 1939 song protesting the lynching of Black Americans made famous by American jazz singer Billie Holiday, 1915-1959).



Apsaras, 2013

Mixed media, 60 x 60 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.38

Hung LIU (LIU Hung 劉虹, Chinese-born American, 1948-2021)

Apsara V, 2013

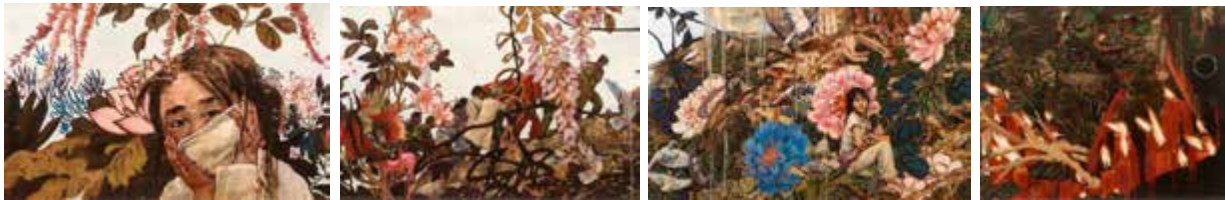
Mixed media, 20 ½ x 20 ½ inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.36

In the aftermath of the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake, Hung Liu began creating works that juxtaposed images of suffering with auspicious flowers, colorful circles, and images of flying *apsaras* (angelic Buddhist figures) derived from eighth-century Buddhist cave temple paintings at Dunhuang. The smaller of the two examples to the left is a study for the larger composition.

...I hope to wash my subjects of their exotic “otherness” and reveal them as dignified, even mythic figures on the grander scale of history painting. I am looking for the mythic pose beneath the historical figure and the painting beneath the photograph.

- Hung Liu, 2004



Apsaras, 2012

Mixed-media quadriptych, 41 x 250 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.19a-d

On May 12, 2008, a devastating 8.0-magnitude earthquake centered near Chengdu, the provincial capital of Sichuan province, resulted in the deaths of approximately 90,000 individuals—leaving a further 18,000 presumed dead, 375,000 injured, and over 5,000,000 homeless. The destruction of the quake and its powerful aftershocks were amplified by shoddy architectural construction and limited local resources. In response, Hung Liu created numerous powerful works, including this expansive meditation on suffering and salvation. *Apsaras* are Buddhist heavenly beings whose presence connotes passage to a higher realm. Liu's twenty-foot-wide mixed-media composition combines depictions of lost or orphaned children, the rubble of broken buildings, rescue workers, and medical personnel, with lush floral imagery, figures of flying *apsaras* from the cave temples of Dunhuang, and rows of red candles lit in remembrance of those whose lives were lost or irrevocably shattered by the tragedy.



Famine Leftover, 2012

Mixed media, 41 x 41 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.18

Based on a 2005 painting entitled *Meal*, this work focuses on an older woman wearing ragged clothes serenely drinking from a bowl. The composition is enveloped in lush textures and colors, with flowering plum blossoms (a symbol of fortitude) in the foreground, colorful circles, and a variety of playful fish based on works by the eccentric Chinese painter Bada Shanren (circa 1626-1705).



Waiting for Rain II, 2012

Mixed media, 41 x 41 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.29

Over a ground of archaic Chinese characters, a woman sits with arms crossed beside a variety of bowls and teapots. She is surrounded by dripping colored brushstrokes, Zen *ensō*-like circles, and birds derived from traditional Chinese paintings. In the center of the composition is a small square on which is depicted a Neolithic tripod vessel.

Section III - Women:



On the Grass I (left) and **Fairy Tale – Blue** (right), 2015

Mixed media, 41 x 41 inches (each)

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.43-44

In 1991, Hung Liu returned to China for the first time since emigrating to the U.S. One goal she set for herself was to search for old photographs. Unfortunately, none of her family had any to share since such items had been perceived as being counter revolutionary and thus were often destroyed by their owners before they could be discovered by the authorities. Nevertheless, with assistance, Hung Liu gained access to the archives of the Beijing Film Studio, where she came across a trunk containing an early twentieth-century album of photos of famous Chinese prostitutes. She was fascinated by these strange hybrid images, which juxtaposed rather tame portraits of beautiful Chinese women with peculiar Western backdrops, furniture, and props. In much the same way that Liu bristled at the portrayal of Chinese people as “types” by western photographers, she empathized with the plight of these forgotten prostitutes whose images were captured purely for the enjoyment of their patrons. So she began to use these images as her source materials for a large body of work that portrays these women with a sense of dignity and self-possession. This suite of rich blue-toned pictures superimposes languorous portraits of prostitutes reading with delicate flower-and-bird imagery derived from traditional Chinese paintings.



Ox Year (Cow and Girls III), 2009

Mixed media, 41 x 41 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.7

In this colorful work, Hung Liu combines an image of two seated prostitutes with a famous painting of oxen by Han Huang (723-787) in the Palace Museum, Beijing. Created as a study for the larger mixed-media work *The Cow and the Girls*, it incorporates a central image of a snuff bottle decorated with peaches, a Daoist symbol of immortality. The traditional couplet inscribed to the right and left can be read:

Clouds rise between rocks and quiet streams,
 Sun shines through silk screen and bare windows.*
Xi jing yun shengshi, Chuang xu ri nong sha.
 溪靜雲生石, 窗虛日弄紗.

*Transcription and translation courtesy of HP Lin and Helen Liu.



Cruise, 2014

Mixed-media triptych, 60 x 96 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.42a-c

This mixed-media work is inspired by early twentieth-century studio portraits of Chinese prostitutes posing in a prop boat. Hung Liu created a 1992 installation focusing on the same figures (though reversed) and cagily titled it *Raft of the Medusa*, referencing the famous 1818-19 Romantic painting of that name by Théodore Géricault (1791-1824). However, in this version of the theme, Liu has superimposed the figures, one of which is wearing a man's hat, over a traditional Chinese literati landscape and flanked the composition with expressionistic lotus and duck motifs.



Red Curtain, 2010

Mixed-media triptych, 60 x 81 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.8a-c

This composition features two young women wearing impassive expressions from a historic photograph juxtaposed with elegant blossoming branches. Between the figures is a small acrylic box containing three-dimensional models of peaches and pearls—symbols of immortality and prosperity—above which can be seen an image of two flickering flames atop red candles, an element Hung Liu often used to suggest remembrance.

Section IV - Death:



Wings II, 2011

Mixed-media triptych, 41 x 81 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.14a-c

This is one of a series of powerful images of faces combined with traditional Chinese bird and flower imagery that Hung Liu created in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. In this dramatic composition, the face of a solemn young girl is juxtaposed with a wild goose derived from a Qing-dynasty (1644-1912) civil official's court insignia badge. The blood-red sky is filled with a proliferation of flying cranes that reference a Northern Song-dynasty (960–1127) painting of an auspicious dream attributed to Emperor Huizong (1082-1135), a handscroll now in the Liaoning Provincial Museum in Shenyang. Hung Liu referenced the same imperial crane painting in her evocative 2006 installation *Going Away, Coming Home* at Oakland International Airport.



Cycle, 2012

Mixed-media quadriptych, 41 x 164 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.21a-d

While hiking in the Oakland Hills in 2009, Hung Liu came upon the delicate carcass of a deer. Entranced by its beauty even in death, she reverently sketched and painted it from multiple angles and used those studies to produce the series *Deer Angel* and *Seven Steps to Heaven*, as well as a shaped-canvas installation entitled *The Dance*. Here she punctuated a four-panel composition of the carcass with scattered flower petals and Zen *ensō*-like circles, suggesting a Buddhist funerary ritual.

Section V - Children:



Leaping (Yue), 2012

Mixed media, 41 x 60 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.31

Based on the composition of Hung Liu's 2003 oil painting *Great Leap*, this work depicts eight naked boys jumping exuberantly together into the unknown accompanied by a praying mantis and surrounded by expressionistic brushwork and Zen *ensō*-like circles. The image was inspired by photos Liu took of peasant children during her period of "reeducation" in the countryside (1968-72). Perhaps because of its title, which must have been perceived as a reference to China's disastrous 1958-60 Great Leap Forward (that resulted in one of the worst famines in recorded history), the original painting was the focus of controversy when it was shown in China in 2010. More recently, the Chinese government denied Customs clearance for works that Liu was scheduled to display in a 2019-20 retrospective exhibition planned by Beijing's Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA), about which Liu remarked:

*My work has always been about human struggle in epic times. There are lots of exhibitions in China, often by foreigners, in which the art is more experimental and in many ways more daring than mine, so I can only guess that, perhaps because of who I am, there is too much history in my work.**

*Quoted in Lisa Movius "Beijing officials deny permit for show of Chinese-American artist amid political tensions" in the *Art Newspaper*, 19 November 2019.



Mission Girls Series 1, 2013

Mixed media, 13 ½ x 13 ½ inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.37

This is one of many poignant portraits of children that Hung Liu created based on individual figures from a nineteenth-century photo entitled *Class in Girls' School, Episcopal Mission, Wuchang*. In 2002, she created a series of over twenty small oil paintings of those children.

Hung LIU (LIU Hung 劉虹, Chinese-born American, 1948-2021)

Yellow Flowers, 2010

Mixed media, 41 x 41 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.12

Hung LIU (LIU Hung 劉虹, Chinese-born American, 1948-2021)

Sisterhood, 2016

Mixed media, 41 x 41 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.50

One of Hung Liu's most enduringly popular subjects, *Sisterhood* depicts three small girls with linked arms surrounded by effervescent bubbles of colored paint. This mixed-media work relates to her 2003 oil painting *Sister Hoods (Sisters in Arms)*, which is sometimes ironically paired with an image of three female Communist prisoners (see *Sentencing Day*, on view on the opposite side of the gallery).

Section VI – Displacement/Identity:



Polly (left) and **Polly and her Horses** (right), 2008

Mixed media, 41 x 41 inches (each)

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.4-5

After moving to the U.S. in 1984, Hung Liu had ample opportunity to reflect on the process of becoming an American. Given her own transnational status, she had great interest in, and empathy for, the fraught histories of other immigrants—particularly the nineteenth-century Chinese who came to work on the railroad, in canneries, and in search of gold. One early immigrant who captured Liu's attention was Chinese-born Polly Bemis (1853-1933), who was sold into slavery as a young woman and wound up in an Idaho gold-mining camp in the 1870s. Liu created a series of portraits based on historical photos of Bemis, surrounding her with auspicious flowers, animals, birds, and butterflies. These were the first American images that Liu created and can be seen as a bridge to her more recent work, which was inspired by the Depression and Dust Bowl-era imagery of pioneering American photographer Dorothea Lange (1895-1965), one example of which is on view in the lobby.



Hung LIU (LIU Hung 劉虹, Chinese-born American, 1948-2021)

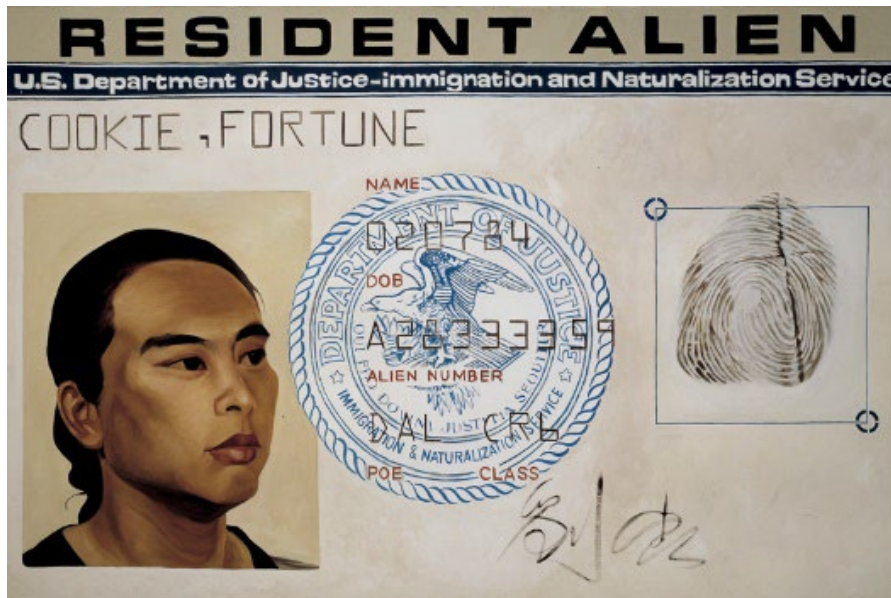
Fortune Cookies, 2013

Mixed-media icosptych (set of 20), 10 x 10 inches (each)

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.49a-t

Hung Liu's breakout masterpiece was the monumental 1988 oil painting entitled *Resident Alien* (now in the San Jose Museum of Art) in which she reproduced her U.S.-government-issued Resident Alien card, complete with I.D. photo, fingerprint, and signature, but in place of her actual birthdate (1948) she transposed the last two digits to read 1984 (the year that she arrived in the U.S., and also referencing *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the dystopian science-fiction novel by George Orwell, 1903-1950), and changed her proper name at the top to read "Cookie, Fortune." Part of an installation focusing on the fraught identity and treatment of Asians and people of Asian descent in America, this work garnered significant scholarly interest. Liu went on to use fortune cookies as pointed cultural touchstones in other works, most famously her 1994 installation *Jiu Jin Shan: Old Gold Mountain*, which included 200,000 actual fortune cookies, along with train tracks and shaped canvases to commemorate the early Chinese immigrants who came to the U.S. to toil under harsh and often degrading conditions with the hope of creating a better life for themselves and their families.

In this playful ensemble of twenty still life compositions, Hung Liu has depicted a succession of one through twenty fortune cookies.



Hung Liu, **Resident Alien**, 1988. Oil on canvas, 60 x 90 inches, San Jose Museum of Art.



Dandelion with Small Bird, 2017

Mixed media, 41 x 41 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.51

While driving across the U.S. to visit various national parks and monuments, Hung Liu enjoyed taking photos of the dandelion seed heads she encountered. She proceeded to create a series of evocative images featuring them as symbols of hope and regeneration:

*The dandelions, fragile in nature and tattered by the lightest breeze, mimic how images, and personal narratives, too, can be scattered by time and the winds of history—as well as by the rhythms of feast and famine, like the Okies migrating west and the Mexicans north in the 1930s. The landscape of struggle is familiar terrain, reminding me of the epic revolution and displacement in Mao’s China. Only, now I am painting American peasants looking for the promised land.**

*Hung Liu “Notes on Design” in *Zoetrope: All-Story*, Guest Designer: Hung Liu (Winter 17/18, Vol. 21, No. 4), pp. 8-9.

SORENG GALLERY:



The Party Leads the Way, 2011

Mixed-media diptych, 41 x 82 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.15a,b

During the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), Hung Liu was sent to the countryside for reeducation. Later, she worked as a propaganda artist and instructor at Beijing's Central Academy of Fine Art and hosted a television program. After immigrating to the U.S. in 1984, she studied art at UC San Diego and then taught at Mills College for twenty-four years before retiring in 2014. In this mixed-media work, Liu combined an image of a fruit known as a Buddha Hand, or fingered citron, with a scene from the propaganda ballet entitled *Red Detachment of Women* (*Hongse niangzijun*), the most famous of the Eight Model Plays sanctioned by the Chinese government during the Cultural Revolution.



Spring Thunder, 2012

Mixed media, 41 x 73 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.33

Based on the 2011 oil painting *Jingzhe—Spring Thunder* from a series that references the Chinese season when insects awaken from their dormant state. Flying dragonflies, crickets, a cicada and a praying mantis hover around the four little girls, who wear pained expressions and cover their ears.



Dynasties, 2012

Mixed-media quadriptych, 48 x 120 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.22a-d

In 2011, Hung Liu received a Lifetime Achievement in Printmaking Award for her development with Trillium Graphics master printer David Salgado (1949-2018) of an innovative mixed-media technique that transferred her unique vision to a new medium. In 2018, they donated a legacy collection of 55 such works to this museum. In this playful example, Liu included portraits of three Chinese emperors (all now in Taiwan's National Palace Museum, Taipei). From left to right are the yellow-robed figure of Emperor Yongle (1360-1424) of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), along with the white-robed Emperor Taizu (927-976) and red-robed Emperor Renzong (1010-1063) of the Song (960-1279). Liu chose to flip the image of Emperor Taizu, perhaps to create more of a sense of conversation between the figures. The monkey on the right was derived from a Maruyama Shijō-style Japanese painting by Mori Sosen (1747-1821). All four figures are superimposed over a riot of plum blossoms and a section of the *Ten Views of the Wangchuan Villa* by the Ming-dynasty painter Qiu Ying (1494-1552), a handscroll in the collection of the Jinlin Museum in Changchun.



Ma II, 2014

Mixed media, 41 x 41 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.40

During the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), Hung Liu was sent to the countryside for reeducation. Later, she worked as a propaganda artist and instructor at Beijing's Central Academy of Fine Art and hosted a television program. After immigrating to the U.S. in 1984, she studied art at UC San Diego and then taught at Mills College for twenty-four years before retiring in 2014. In this enchanting composition, a pair of Mandarin ducks glide through rainbow-colored waves surrounded by bouquets of flowers. Beneath can be seen the pale reflection of a smiling old woman.



Loveland, 2010

Mixed-media triptych, 41 x 81 ½ inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.13a-c

In this exuberant triptych, Hung Liu combined auspicious imagery derived from traditional Chinese paintings such as Mandarin ducks (which were believed to remain faithful to their partners for life), a famous painting of oxen by Han Huang (723-787) in the Palace Museum, Beijing, and an extravagant array of colorful blossoms.



Lovefield, 2010

Mixed media, 18 x 36 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.9

In 2011, the artist Hung Liu received a Lifetime Achievement in Printmaking Award for her development with Trillium Graphics master printer David Salgado (1949-2018) of an innovative mixed-media technique that transferred her unique vision to a new medium. In 2018, they donated a legacy collection of 55 such works to this museum. This work was created as a study for the larger triptych displayed on the wall to the right.



Companion II, 2012

Mixed media, 41 x 41 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.25

In this mixed-media work, Hung Liu has depicted a contemplative older gentleman from a historic photo surrounded by a variety of birds drawn from traditional Chinese paintings. In the center is a small square image of pomegranates, an age-old symbol of fertility. This work is based on a 1998 oil painting entitled **Reverie**.



Girl and Crane, 2007

Mixed media, 41 x 41 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.1

In 2011, Hung Liu received a Lifetime Achievement in Printmaking Award for her development with Trillium Graphics master printer David Salgado (1949-2018) of an innovative mixed-media technique that transferred her unique vision to a new medium. In 2018, they donated a collection of 55 such mixed-media works to the JSMA. This is one of their first experiments and combines source elements drawn from traditional Chinese paintings (such as the crane and the garden wall), expressionistic fish, bird, and fruit from eccentric painter Bada Shanren (circa 1626-1705), and a historic photograph of a woman with bound feet, punctuated by foliage and Liu's characteristic circles. In the center is a separate panel featuring a Chinese guardian lion.



Ayi (Auntie) Study I, 2014

Mixed media, 20 ½ x 20 ½ inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.41

Although originally trained as a Socialist Realist artist, gestural brushstrokes and filmy washes lend Hung Liu's works a poetic, almost dreamlike quality – the antithesis of the rigorous propaganda style required during her youth in China. In this diminutive, lyrical work, she surrounds the portrait of a dignified older woman with imagery of auspicious birds derived from traditional Chinese paintings and textiles.



Hung LIU (LIU Hung 劉虹, Chinese-born American, 1948-2021)

Imperial Column, 2016

Mixed media, 93 x 82 inches

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.47

During the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), Hung Liu was sent to the countryside for reeducation. Later, she worked as a propaganda artist and instructor at Beijing's Central Academy of Fine Art and hosted a television program. After immigrating to the U.S. in 1984, she studied art at UC San Diego and then taught at Mills College for twenty-four years before retiring in 2014. Building on the foundation of the Socialist Realist style she learned in China, Liu loosened her brushwork and broadened her subject matter to create colorful, gestural, paintings with layered veils of dripping pigment that reference history, memory, displacement, and social justice. In this monumental work, she combines an image from an early twentieth-century photograph of a man embracing a gigantic pillar in the Hall of Supreme Harmony (Taihedian), the largest and most formal building in the Forbidden City, with flying apsaras (angelic Buddhist figures) and flower petals derived from eighth-century cave temple paintings at Dunhuang, and her characteristic circles derived from Zen *ensō* paintings, which connote the passage of time.

LOBBY:



Hung LIU (LIU Hung 劉虹, Chinese-born American, 1948-2021)

12 Months, 2008

Mixed-media polyptych (set of 12), Diam. 12 inches (each)

Gift of Artist Hung Liu and Trillium

Graphics/David Salgado, 2018:25.3a-1

In 2003, Hung Liu began working with Trillium Graphics master printer David Salgado (1948-2018) to develop a new process. Their objective was to create innovative, mixed-media works combining aspects of painting, printmaking, and photography that would allow her to revisit and enhance figures and elements from her painted oeuvre and embed them in translucent layers of resin. After 15 years of collaboration, they created a legacy collection of 55 such mixed-media works representing her characteristic subjects and generously donated the group to the JSMA, where it is now the focus of the special exhibition ***Remember This: Hung Liu at Trillium.***

These twelve images of the same beautiful woman's profile were based on nineteenth-century portraits of Chinese by western photographers John Thomson (Scottish, 1837-1921) and Wilhelm Burger (Austrian, 1844-1920). Hung Liu was shocked at how such works exoticized and objectified their subjects, who were treated more like specimens than people. She began to incorporate figures from historic photographs into her paintings with the intent of uplifting and empowering them. In this series, she decorated each successive portrait with a flower representing one of the twelve months, including winter jasmine, apricot, peach, tree peony, pomegranate, lotus, orchid, sweet Osmanthus, chrysanthemum, Chinese rose, plum, and narcissus.



Hung LIU (LIU Hung 劉虹,
Chinese-born American, 1948-2021)
Oklahoma, 2021
Mixed media, 60 x 60 inches
Proposed Acquisition, L2021:188.1

Chinese-born American artist Hung Liu (1948-2021) explores themes of history, memory, suffering, and social justice in her art. Characterized by layers of luminous color, drips, and gestural circles,

Liu's works impart dignity on the poor, the afflicted, and the displaced. In 2015, Liu began a series of paintings inspired by the Dust Bowl-era portraits by pioneering American photographer Dorothea Lange (1895-1965). Liu found a kindred spirit in Lange, another intrepid female artist who made work intending to document injustice and inspire empathy.

This mixed-media work by Hung Liu is based on one of Lange's most famous subjects, *Migrant Mother*—a Cherokee woman later identified as Florence Owens Thompson (1903-1983) that Lange met in 1936 in a farm workers camp in Nipomo, California, where she was struggling to support seven children. Liu faithfully rendered the haggard figure feeding her baby, but replaced the tattered tent of the original photo with a rustic building in a barren landscape. She also added a delicate long-tailed bird and one of her signature brushed circles, which in this case suggests a celestial body as well as connoting the passage of time.

Despite housing a large collection of Hung Liu's mixed-media works, the JSMA does not own any of her most recent compositions inspired by Dorothea Lange. If you would like to see this wonderful piece become part of the museum's permanent collection, please consider making a donation toward its purchase.

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