



Hung Liu – American Dreams

June 28 through July 24, 2017

Opening Reception Friday, July 7, 5-7pm

Hung Liu's career has been built upon her signature portrayal of imagery from her Chinese homeland, yet she has made her home in the United States since 1984. In her newest body of work, Liu explores her American identity through the iconic imagery of Dust Bowl Era (particularly Dorothy Lange's) photography.

Born in China to a captain in Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Army, Hung Liu's father was captured by Communist forces and imprisoned in a labor camp. Hung and her mother fled to Beijing, where they survived Mao Zedong's Great Leap Forward and the

mass famine it induced. Hung's mother destroyed all family photos depicting Hung's father in order to protect Hung from the Mao regime, which viewed Nationalists and their families as enemies of the people. Hung thus came to treasure family photographs, whether they depicted her own family or someone else's.

When Hung was sent to the countryside for proletarian "re-education" at age 20, toiling in rice and wheat fields 364 days/year for four long years, a friend asked Hung to safeguard her camera. During that time, Hung took secret photographs of her fellow Chinese laborers. These photographs became her collective family album; they are the basis for her iconic portraits in which she has memorialized these workers' humanity for the last thirty years of her painting practice.

Liu became interested in Lange's imagery through their shared passion of capturing the dignity of their subjects. Historically, Liu's work has carried the themes of migration, labor, oppression, and marginalization, and these themes continue through and tie together this newest series. Through her art, Liu recognizes the power inherent in the struggle of Dust Bowl and Great Depression Era migrant workers, field hands, immigrants, and disenfranchised minorities. Vivid strokes of vibrancy crack through what is a predominantly muted color palette as if to breathe new life into the pale ghosts of the dispossessed. Hung speaks of the Americans in her paintings as her ancestors, even though she is from China: "we adopt each other's children, why shouldn't we adopt each other's ancestors, as well?"

This exploration is meant to act as a magnifying lens for the current global refugee crisis, driven by war, ecological disaster, and famine. Caught amid a global political climate of growing fear and distrust, Hung Liu makes a potent statement about our place as moral citizens of common history.