

**Press Release**

**Siyan Wong's Solo Painting Exhibition *Lives of Three Canners: New York's Chinese Elderly Immigrants* on View Beginning October 28**



*Ah Xim at Home*, 2023, oil on canvas, 36H x 48W

**Exhibition Dates:** October 28–November 17, 2023  
**Press Viewing:** Wednesday, October 25, at 3pm  
**Opening Reception:** Saturday, October 28, at 2pm  
**Exhibition Location:** Chinese American Arts Council,  
Gallery 456  
456 Broadway, 3rd Floor, Soho, New York  
**Viewing Hours:** Mon, Wed, Fri, Sat & Sun, 1–5pm

Opening October 28, 2023 at Gallery 456 of the Chinese American Arts Council, *Lives of Three Cannery: New York's Chinese Elderly Immigrants*, presents Siyan Wong's nine new paintings of today's elderly Chinese immigrants who collect cans and bottles for redemption. These oil paintings visually situate the viewers in the past and present moments lived by each of the three cannery – Choi Yee, Ah Xim, and He Ping – as young adults in China from 1960s to 1980s, as middle-age low-wage immigrant workers in New York City from 1990s to 2000s, and as elderly cannery today. Her subjects represent recent Chinese immigrants in Chinatown and the Lower East Side whose lives were defined by their employment in garment factories, restaurants, and home care - work that often make these non-English speakers vulnerable to various labor law violations but which they must accept in order to make a living.

Born in China and raised in New York City, Siyan is a first-generation immigrant herself. Her paintings show a people and community rarely presented in fine arts.

Each of Siyan's social realist paintings, in vibrant colors, captures a fleeting moment that exudes the human experience of living – depicting lives whose efflorescence were only confined by the politics of their days. Together, they show the human spirit always venturing toward a better life.

Mostly 36 by 48 inches, each painting tells a story about work and is a commentary on the present moment where poverty and income inequality are often unchallenged. A self-taught painter who draws inspirations in part from her work as a worker rights lawyer of over 20 years, Siyan sees the quality of life for the most vulnerable as a gauge on the health of a society. While these paintings aim to celebrate the enduring spirit of Choi Yee, Ah Xim, and He Ping, they are also a mirror on our souls.

Additionally, this exhibition features two collaborated conceptual installations with filmmaker and artist Alvin Tsang that highlight the work of canners. They question the monetary value of work and our perception of a person's worthiness of respect based on how much they make and their willingness to work.

Beyond the exhibition opening:

- On Saturday, November 4th at 3pm, Siyan is moderating a panel discussion, "Heart to Heart with People Who Collect Cans: How, Why, and What are the Solutions?" Participating on the panel are Lynn Lewis (teacher, activist and former executive director of *Picture the Homeless*); Jean Rice (founding board member of *PTH*, a former homeless and a canner); and members of *Sure We Can* (a nonprofit bottles and cans redemption center in Brooklyn).
- On Saturday, November 11th at 3pm, Siyan will give an artist talk about her paintings and art practice.
- School trips of all ages and private tours are welcome. Please contact Siyan at [artistsiyanwong@gmail.com](mailto:artistsiyanwong@gmail.com) to make arrangements.

This exhibition is made possible by the New York State Council for the Arts (NYSCA), the Asian Women Giving Circle (AWGC), and the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC).

Siyan's work has been exhibited at Governor's Island, National Arts Club, New York Arts Center, and Equity Gallery (founded by social realist painter Jacob Lawrence). She has given talks about her art practice and social justice at the Asia Society, The Black Institute and various universities. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the New York Artist Equity Association (NYAE).

Follow her on Instagram [@artistsiyanwong](https://www.instagram.com/artistsiyanwong), and her website is [www.siyanwong.com](http://www.siyanwong.com).

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