

## Acclaimed artist Hung Liu memorializes the marginalized at the National Museum of Women in the Arts

Hung Liu: *Making History* exhibition marks the inaugural  
presentation of several new acquisitions



Hung Liu, *Women Working: Loom*, 1999; Soft-ground etching and spitbite aquatint with scraping and burnishing on paper, 31 1/2 x 41 3/4 in.; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Promised Gift of Steven Scott, Baltimore, in loving memory of his grandmother, Anna Kemper Albert; © Hung Liu Estate/Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY

**WASHINGTON**—The National Museum of Women in Arts ([NMWA](http://nmwa.org)) presents *Hung Liu: Making History*, opening October 21 after the museum's two-year, top-to-bottom renovation. Chinese-born American artist Hung Liu (1948–2021) is best known for transforming her canvases and paper surfaces into memorial sites steeped in symbolism. This spotlight exhibition in the museum's new fourth-floor galleries features nine paintings and works on paper, including several that have never been exhibited at NMWA. *Hung Liu: Making History* is on view through October 20, 2024.

Liu grew up during Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution in China, where she labored for several years as part of a forced agrarian re-education initiative before training as a painter. In 1984, she immigrated to California, where she continued her art education. In the 1990s, Liu came across a cache of historical black-and-white photographs of sex workers, child street acrobats, women laborers, soldiers and war refugees from pre-revolutionary China. These photographs became her source material: she combined the imagery with traditional Chinese motifs to create powerful portraits of these oft-forgotten individuals, whom she called "spirit ghosts." Liu portrayed them as mythic figures on the grand scale of history painting.

*Hung Liu: Making History* highlights the many techniques that Liu used to create her poignant portraits, including collage, layered colors and motifs and screens of drip marks that she described as a "veil of tears." The effect distorts her subjects, suggesting the blurring of one's memories over time.

The exhibition marks the inaugural presentation of Liu's major paintings *Summer with Cynical Fish* (2014) and *Winter with Cynical Fish* (2014), works acquired by the museum just prior to its recent two-year closure. In addition, a large-scale canvas featuring Liu's signature expressive brushstrokes, evocative symbols and dazzling colors will be on view alongside works from the collection.



Hung Liu, *Summer with Cynical Fish*, 2014; Oil on canvas, 60 x 72 in.; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of the artist and Turner Carroll Gallery in honor of Nancy Livingston; ; © 2023 Hung Liu Estate/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

High-resolution images are available upon request.

*Hung Liu: Making History* is organized by the National Museum of Women in the Arts. The exhibition is generously supported by Stephanie Sale and the members of NMWA.

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