

Art

PAINT EXCEEDS MEDIUM

In new Silvermine show



Silvermine Arts Center / Contributed photos



Top: "New Nature - Plastic Chicken" by Jennifer McCandless. **Left:** "The Long Walk Home" by Lisa Cain. **Right:** "Sitting in the Living Room on the Other Side of the World" by Khanh Le.



By Mike Horyczun

Michelle Y. Loh sees visual art as an important conduit for communication.

"One thing I am so inspired by is the fact that art and literature — but in particular for me, visual art — is really a bridge going between different cultures," said the New York-based curator, gallery director, and lecturer. "I feel that it's a way to bring people together to understand each other better."

Loh brings that philosophy to New Canaan in a new exhibition she's curating entitled "PAINT 2021," which opens at the Silvermine Arts Center on May 8 and runs through June 30.

"I wanted to look at paint as a bridge going between different mediums," said Loh. "That's why it's very important for me to include works in this exhibition by artists who use paint as a tool to express what's most important or most comfortable for them, or who actually go into a bit of unfamiliar territory."

Original artwork from any medium was considered for "PAINT 2021," and the show was open to artists internationally. Although the theme was paint, Loh looked specifically for works that expressed vitality, diversity and experimentation. Plus, the works had to have been completed after January 2018.

"I wanted to include works with all these different directions that portray the current time," said Loh. "I feel that's particularly important right now, as we slowly emerge from the pandemic. There's a lot of uncertainties, there's movement, there's static displacement, there's a lot of complex feelings happening. It's a little bit chaotic, but that's also exciting and inspiring."

The end result is a collection of approximately 70 works by 46 artists chosen from nearly 300 applicants. Countries represented include Italy, France, Great Britain, Ireland, Canada, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Artists from throughout the U.S. are also included, from states ranging from Texas, California, Alabama, South Carolina and Wisconsin to Maine, Vermont, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C., as well as New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

Locally, Sarah Balcombe from Greenwich, Susan Cutler Tremaine from New Canaan, and Kevin Ford from Norwalk made the final cut.

"I'm excited about the variety of the work and the background of the artists,"

said Loh. "Some of the artists are very sophisticated and trained, others are self-taught. In terms of the work, we do have a fantastic film artist, and I included several animation works. I have a couple of small installation objects using clay, ceramics, and a variety of materials. So, I think the exhibition is very eclectic and very dynamic."

It's not the first time Loh has worked at Silvermine. "I have been involved there

for several years through some of their patrons and member artists," she said, "and last year, when everything shut down, they had an exhibition called 'The Golden Door.' I offered to do virtual interviews with exhibited artists, so even though people couldn't go to the gallery to see the show, they at least were able to gather a glimpse of what the works were like. I did virtual interviews for eleven artists throughout the course of maybe two months."

She also co-curated an exhibition at the Bruce Museum in Greenwich called "Tales of Two Cities: New York & Beijing" in 2014 that paired six artists who worked in New York City with six Chinese artists who worked in Beijing and New York to exchange artistic ideas and approaches to art making.

Loh is originally from Shanghai but came to the United States shortly after she finished high school in China. She's a naturalized citizen and graduated from Stockton State College in New Jersey, where she studied computer graphics, graphics, and animation. She also has a Masters degree from the University of Pennsylvania.

"I think my cultural influences are very diversified and a little bit hybrid," she said. "My maternal grandmother back in China was a painter. She did traditional Chinese figurative ink painting. My mother was a teacher in modern European literature, and I was influenced by both of them."

Prior to the pandemic, Loh would frequently travel China. "I work a lot with artists based in Shanghai and Beijing, so I would go back to China, at least once a year, if not more. But, I consider here my home, because my daughter was born here and most of my immediate family is here."

The Silvermine Galleries are open Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Call (203) 966-9700, ext. 3, or visit silvermineart.org.

Mike Horyczun is a freelance writer.



"Terrain" by Lauren Yandell.

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I Want to Fly to the Universe (2020). The New York Botanical Garden, 2021. Urethane paint on aluminum. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of Ota Fine Arts, Tokyo/Singapore/Shanghai; David Zwirner, New York; Victoria Miro, London/Venice