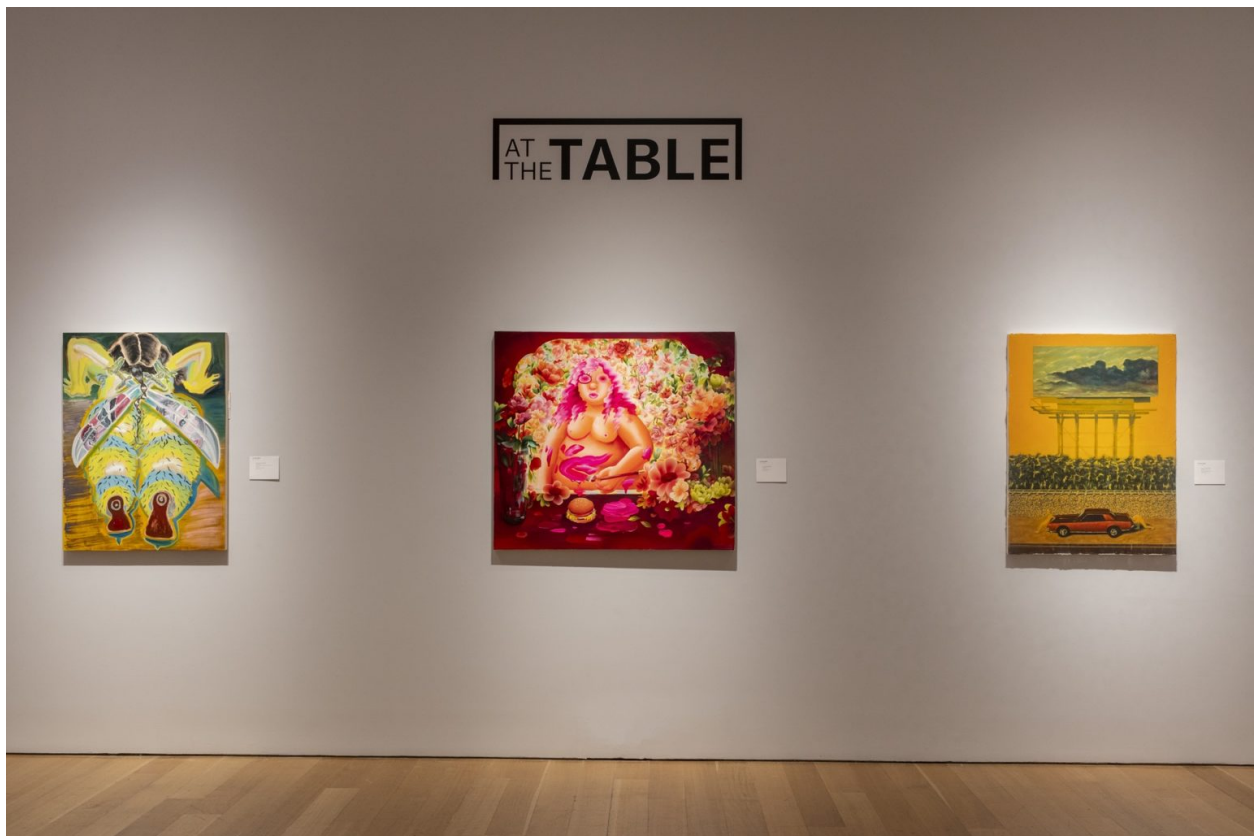


Christie's 'At the Table' exhibition showcases AAPI artists

"A table is where ideas and stories are shared, where camaraderie begets growth and development. While our realities can feel like a puzzle, some answers can be found through the ability to empathize."

Stella Cai Published July 15, 2022



All photos courtesy of Christie's

From June 20 to July 1, Christie's New York showcased a private exhibition titled "At the Table," which featured 38 works from 30 AAPI artists.

"The idea was born out of a need to address the increased violence towards the AAPI community in the depths of COVID-19 pandemic," said Rachel Ng, a cataloguer at Christie's and one of the three co-organizers of the exhibition. "The goal of the exhibition was to raise awareness as well as find a way to give back to a community in immediate need."

Artist Ho Jae Kim conceived the idea for the exhibition before getting in touch with an employee within Christie's Corporate Social Responsibility team. After Ng got involved, she proposed that the team work with Heart of Dinner, a local nonprofit organization started during the pandemic that delivers care packages of hot meals and fresh produce paired with handwritten and illustrated letters in the recipients' native languages.

Ng and Kim then connected with Sarah Han, the Director of Harper's Gallery, and the trio set to work inviting artists to participate in the exhibition.

The curated artworks reflected the artists' personal experiences as Asian, Asian American, and multiracial individuals.

One of the artists on display was Yowshien Kuo, a Taiwanese artist whose piece "At the Base of a Teardrop" was created with acrylic, bone ash, iridescent pigment, chalk, glitter, and paper on canvas. For Kuo, the piece reflects "the psychological turmoil an individual perhaps may experience with a multicultural background. The figure has transformed (assimilated) themselves to fit a mold in which they feel will bring them happiness, or 'success.'"



Kuo's artwork has been shown by Luce Gallery in Los Angeles, and will have a solo exhibition at the Contemporary Art Museum in St. Louis at the end of the year. Kuo said he is deeply encouraged by the creation of the exhibit.

"The AAPI community can't have enough work being shared, not only in the visual arts but all forms of creative expression," Kuo said. "The allowance of creative expression is cultural currency and the value of this currency holds the weight of individuality, which is absolutely vital if there is a goal to strengthen communal and cultural bonds between various peoples."

Yesiyu Zhao, another artist with two pieces in the exhibition, also drew inspiration from his Chinese heritage. His piece "Sword Wings" is inspired by Peking Opera.

“Traditionally, there are many different faces and characters in the opera. I used the reflections of two swords to split an opera face where half is masculine and the other feminine. By doing so, I try to express the complexity and openness in sexuality,” Zhao said.



Yesiyu Zhao, “Sword Wings”



Yesiyu Zhao, “Spider Queen”

For his other piece, titled “Spider Queen,” Zhao was inspired by *Journey to the West*, a classic Chinese tale in which spider demons lure people into a cave.

“I perceive these monsters and demons as the ‘other.’ Like immigrants and other minorities in the United States, they all have a right to live and thrive in their own ways,” said Zhao, whose art journey started 10 years ago when he dropped out from an econ and math program at the University of California, San Diego to pursue a fine arts degree at the School of Visual Arts in NYC.

The exhibition opened on June 20 and hosted a reception on June 24 with around 200 guests, and featured a performance piece by Ayoung Justine Yu and Nicholas Oh of Aydo Studio, alongside their collaborators Antonius Bui and Sohye Kim.

The works are being sold in a private sale, which works differently from an auction. In a private sale, a work on offer is assigned a set asking price and sent to select clients and sold to the buyer that wants to move forward with the asking price. In the case of *At the Table*, Han suggests which collector to place the work with, rather than selling based on a first-come, first-serve basis.

“We have been so fortunate to have such great interest in the show,” exhibition co-organizer Ng said. “It is a historic exhibition for Christie’s, as well as for the contemporary art world.”

Ng said she hopes to continue advocating for the AAPI community and finding ways to give back through the help of a major institution like Christie’s. Ng, Kim, and Han also co-founded Civil Art, a New York-based non-profit dedicated to uplifting marginalized voices through arts and literature.

“We hope that through the continual support of our non-profit, we will be able to put together more exhibitions and projects, without feeling like we have to rely on a larger institution for support,” Ng said.