



Hung Liu in a wheat field, c. 1971-72.

JEFF KELLEY

Chronology

1948

Hung Liu is born on February 17, 1948 (January 8 on the Chinese calendar, Year of the Rat), in Changchun, China.

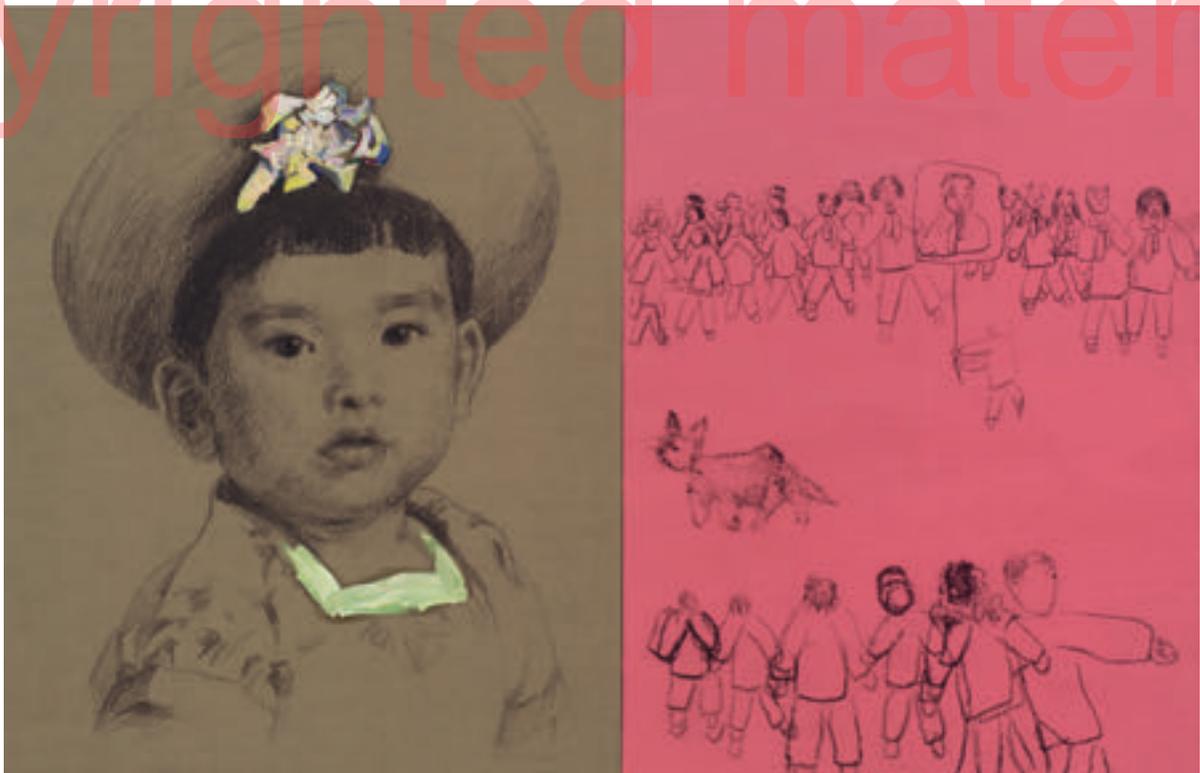
Changchun, previously the capital city for the Japanese puppet dynasty of the exiled Emperor Puyi (1906–1967), is defended by the Nationalist Army (Kuomintang) of Chiang Kai-shek against the advance of Communist forces led by Lin Biao and Mao Zedong.

Liu's father, Xia Peng, is a captain in the Kuomintang army. The city is under siege for months, and starvation and panic ensue despite attempts by U.S. planes to drop food and supplies into Changchun.

In September, Liu's family flees the city looking for food, crossing over into Communist territory. Liu's father is detained by Communist troops at a checkpoint outside Changchun. She will not see him again until 1994.

Seeking refuge, Liu, her mother, aunt, uncle, and grandparents make their way to a village in the Manchurian countryside.

Changchun falls to the Communists in October. Soon after, Liu and her family return to Changchun, "the dead city."



Hung Liu
Rat Year 1948, 2008
Oil on linen and mixed media on wood panel, 64 × 100 in. (162.6 × 254 cm)

1955

After completing kindergarten, Liu begins elementary school.



Hung Liu and her mother, c. 1955.

1957

Mao Zedong initiates the “Great Leap Forward,” an attempt to catch up with the West in agricultural and industrial production.

1959

At age eleven, while standing with other family members at the Changchun train station, Liu begs her mother to allow her to accompany her aunt, Liu Zongyu, to her home in Beijing. Liu’s mother allows her to go “with only the clothes on her back.” The following year, Liu’s grandparents and mother follow Liu, settling in with Zongyu in Beijing.

As a result of Mao’s “Great Leap Forward,” tens of millions of people in China die from starvation between 1959 and 1961.



Hung Liu with her elementary school art teacher and classmates in Beijing, c. 1959.

1961

Liu gains admission to an elite boarding school, the Girls' Middle School attached to Beijing Normal University. She consistently performs at the top of her class, which includes children of top officials in the Communist Party.

1962

The famine finally begins to ebb in the cities.

Chinese-Soviet relations deteriorate.

Liu's grandfather, Liu Weihua, a scholar of the monasteries of Qianshan (Mount Qian) in Manchuria, dies (see cat. 44 and Moss essay, figs. 6, 12, 13).

1966

As Liu, age eighteen, prepares to graduate from the Girls' Middle School attached to Beijing Normal University, the Cultural Revolution begins. Mao unleashes millions of Red Guards in an effort to purge Chinese society of Western, "counterrevolutionary," influences.

Schools close across the country, and Liu is unable to receive her diploma.

Mao decrees free train travel for young people. Although not a Red Guard, Liu rides the trains throughout China—to Xinjiang, Guangzhou, Harbin, Dalian, Shanghai, and Tianjin.



Hung Liu and her cousin Xiaofang in Tiananmen Square, 1966. The women switched their headwear for the photo. The artist wears a People's Liberation Army military hat, while her cousin wears the red scarf that Liu's mother knitted for her.

1968

Liu is sent for proletarian “reeducation” among the peasants in the countryside. While in Dadu Lianghe, she works in rice and wheat fields seven days a week for four years. During this time, she learns to use a camera and makes her first photographs (see cats. 1–4, and Lim essay, figs. 8–11).



Hung Liu in the countryside, 1969–71.



Hung Liu
Sketch of Mao Zedong, 1968–71
Graphite on paper, 5 × 3¾ in. (12.7 × 9.5 cm)



Hung Liu draws on a snow-covered field while in the countryside for reeducation, 1969–71.

1972

U.S. President Richard Nixon arrives in China on February 21.

Schools begin to reopen. Liu enters the revolutionary entertainment department of Beijing Teacher's College to study art and art education. The Chinese Communist Party's policy insists that artists document (that is, idealize) the lives of farmers, soldiers, and workers, causing Liu to use creative means when creating and storing her paintings of Chinese daily life.

1975

Liu graduates from college and begins teaching art at the Jingshan School in Beijing.

Asked to teach children's art on national television, Liu gives weekly lessons from the studios of the Central China Television station. She attains unexpected fame, and her program, *How to Draw and Paint*, runs for several years.

1976

Chinese leader Zhou Enlai dies.

While traveling in northern China with a group of school art teachers, Liu experiences the Tang Shan earthquake, which kills an estimated one million people.

Mao Zedong dies. His body lies in state, and Liu is among the millions who pass by in procession.

The Gang of Four, including Mao's widow, Jiang Qing, is arrested.



Hung Liu (second row, far left) during her military training at Beijing Teacher's College, 1973–74. She is in the company of People's Liberation Army soldiers and officers.



Hung Liu's paint box, which she used in the countryside in the early 1970s.

1977

At age twenty-nine, Liu marries an astronomer. They separate within a year.

1978

Liu gives birth to a son, Ling Chen (see Moss essay, fig. 16).

Deng Xiaoping emerges as the Paramount Leader of China.

The “Open Door Policy” toward the West is established.

Liu participates in a portraiture exhibition at the Winter Palace in Beijing.

1979

After taking China’s national entrance exams, Liu is accepted by the country’s two leading art schools: the Central Academy of Arts and Crafts and the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA), both in Beijing. She decides to attend the latter, majoring in mural painting.

Liu travels to the famous Buddhist cave murals at Dunhuang, in the Gobi Desert along the Silk Road. During her stay, she meets artist Ai Weiwei and has a good experience until she becomes gravely ill, perhaps from drinking local water. She is transported back to Beijing and spends months recovering.

Liu’s grandmother—Wang Jushou—dies.

1980

Liu returns to Dunhuang, where she spends forty days studying and copying the Buddhist cave murals. She also visits famous religious shrines throughout China.

Liu begins *Music of the Great Earth*, a graduation mural project designed for the Foreign Students’ Dining Hall at CAFA (see p. 175).

She applies to the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), for admission to graduate school in the department of visual arts.

Liu finalizes the divorce with her first husband.



Hung Liu during her studies at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing, 1979–81. She is shown in her studio space with replicas of sculptures by Michelangelo.

1981

Liu completes *Music of the Great Earth* and begins teaching at CAFA.

She is accepted to UCSD, but the Chinese government refuses her bid for a passport.

1982

While teaching at CAFA, Liu studies traditional calligraphy and stamp-making with Niu Jun, an aging scholar and Peking Opera playwright. She works with him for three years.

1984

Liu obtains a limited passport for temporary travel to Hong Kong, hoping that it will be easier to travel from there to the United States. While in Hong Kong, she receives word from the Chinese Cultural Ministry that her request for a passport has been granted, and she returns to Beijing.

On October 26, Liu boards a China Air 747 in Beijing and departs for San Francisco. At the airport, she bids farewell to her mother, aunt, and son. It is the first time she has ever been on an airplane. She arrives at San Francisco International Airport with two suitcases and twenty dollars, spending one dollar to rent a luggage cart before flying on to San Diego.

Liu begins graduate studies at UCSD (see Moss essay, fig. 10). Her fellow graduate students include Lorna Simpson, Christine Tamblin, and Jeff Kelley (her future husband).

1985

Allan Kaprow, known for his contributions to the Happenings of the 1960s, asks Liu's class to create art from the contents of a dumpster. The assignment leaves a strong impression on Liu, as it strays from her formal training in Beijing.

She participates in a residency at the Sun Valley Center for the Arts and Humanities in Idaho.

In November, she has her first one-person exhibition at the Sheppard Gallery, University of Nevada, Reno, where she uses the whole space for a mural installation based on the ancient grotto caves of Dunhuang.

1986

Liu visits New York and its museums, seeing important works of Western art for the first time, including paintings by Pablo Picasso, Joan Miró, Jackson Pollock, and Robert Rauschenberg.

In the spring, she marries Kelley at a friend's house in San Antonio, Texas. Her son, mother, and aunt travel from Beijing to join her and Kelley in San Diego.

At year's end, Liu presents her graduate exhibition before she and her family relocate to Arlington, Texas, where Kelley has accepted a teaching job at the University of Texas at Arlington.

1987

Liu teaches a Chinese art history course at the University of Texas at Arlington and works as an artist-in-residence for local public schools.

She shows her work in several Dallas/Fort Worth-area exhibitions.

Liu begins working as a security guard at the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth. While there, she meets Emily Sano, who later becomes the director of the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco. They remain close friends.

Liu begins her series of drawings entitled *Where Is Mao?* (see cats. 8-17).

Liu's mother and aunt return to Beijing. Her son, Ling Chen, remains with her and Kelley.

1988

Liu spends the summer as a resident artist at the Capp Street Project in San Francisco. During that time, she produces a mural, *Reading Room*, for the community room of Chinese for Affirmative Action in Chinatown's historic Kuo Building. Her mixed-media installation, *Resident Alien*, is presented at Capp Street Project (in the Monadnock Building) as the culmination of her research into the history of Chinese immigration to California (see cat. 18).

1989

In the spring, students in Beijing begin assembling in Tiananmen Square, resulting, on June 4, in their violent removal by the People's Liberation Army.

The Tiananmen events serve as inspiration for Liu, who borrows an old, turn-of-the-century photograph of a Chinese woman whose feet were bound and paints *Goddess of Love, Goddess of Liberty* (see cat. 25).

In December, she presents the exhibition *Goddess of Love and Liberty* at Nahan Contemporary Gallery in New York.

She receives her first National Endowment for the Arts Painting Fellowship.

1990

In the spring, Liu accepts a teaching position at Mills College, in Oakland, California.

In June, before moving from Texas to California, she travels throughout Europe with Kelley, visiting the Venice Biennale, where Robert Rauschenberg signs his name on her Chinese passport, offering her "a passport to the art world."

1991

Liu receives her second National Endowment for the Arts Painting Fellowship and begins showing at Rena Bransten Gallery in San Francisco and at the Bernice Steinbaum Gallery in New York.

She returns to China for the first time since leaving in 1984. During her visit, she discovers photographs of Chinese prostitutes, taken at the turn of the century, which she later incorporates into paintings (see cats. 25, 26).

Liu and Ling Chen become U.S. citizens, taking the Oath of Allegiance in San Francisco.

1992

Liu intensifies the theatricality of her paintings by shaping the canvases, displaying kitsch and antique objects on lacquered shelves, and attaching fragments of traditional Chinese architecture (see cats. 19–22, 24).

1993

Liu participates in the *43rd Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting* at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

She returns to China with her husband and son. They travel with Liu's mother to the family's small ancestral village near Shenyang, in northern China. While there, Liu obtains more archival photographs for incorporation into her art.

Drips start to appear as an erosive force in Liu's paintings, and she begins to create canvases that correspond to the outlines of her subjects.

Liu paints a number of "revolutionary" self-portraits (see cat. 20).

1994

Liu participates in *Asia/America: Identities in Contemporary Asian American Art* at the Asia Society in New York.

During the opening of *Year of the Dog*, an exhibition of Liu's work at the Steinbaum Krauss Gallery in New York, she meets the young Chinese artists Yu Hong and Liu Xiaodong (see pp. 175, 180–81).

Liu completes *Jiu Jin Shan* (Old Gold Mountain), an installation of two hundred thousand fortune cookies at the de Young Museum in San Francisco.



Hung Liu
Daughter of the Revolution, 1993
Oil on shaped canvas and wood, with antique bottle
78½ × 62 in. (199.4 × 157.5 cm)

She learns that her father, whom she hasn't seen since she was an infant, has been living on a rural work farm for elderly inmates near Nanjing. She travels there, by coincidence, on Father's Day, to meet him, and learns that he has been imprisoned on and off since 1948 (see cat. 22).

1995

Inspired by Bernardo Bertolucci's film *The Last Emperor* (1988), Liu begins work on a series of paintings that draw inspiration from photographs of China's last imperial court, the Qing Dynasty (see cat. 27).

Liu receives tenure from Mills College.

1996

Liu participates in *American Kaleidoscope: Themes and Perspectives in Recent Art*, at the National Museum of American Art (now the Smithsonian American Art Museum) in Washington, D.C.

Meanwhile, in Japan, her work is included in *American Stories: Amidst Displacement and Transformation*, an exhibition organized by the Setagaya Art Museum and Asahi Shimbun that also includes art by Mike Kelley and Enrique Chagoya (see p. 172).

Liu's father—Xia Peng—dies.

Liu turns forty-eight in the "Year of the Rat," her year. In Chinese mythology, every twelve-year cycle brings a life-changing event, and at her celebration dinner, Liu reflects upon this truth: At twelve she moved to Beijing; at twenty-four, she left the countryside and went to college; at thirty-six, she immigrated to the United States; and at forty-eight, she experienced her father's death, her son's leaving home, her inclusion in a Tokyo exhibition as an "American" artist, and plans for a ten-year survey of her work.

1997

Hong Kong returns to Chinese rule.

Hung Liu: Unfolding Memory—Embodying History opens at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College (where Ling Chen is a student).

Liu begins focusing on the theme of "women at work" in a number of her paintings.

1998

Liu's first retrospective exhibition, *Hung Liu: A Ten-Year Survey 1988–1998*, is presented at the College of Wooster Art Museum and travels to five additional U.S. museums.

Liu receives a Joan Mitchell Foundation grant.

Construction begins on the Great Firewall of China.

1999

Working on large canvases, Liu begins depicting women and children as refugees from war and social upheaval. She continues the series for the next few years (see cats. 29–31), aspiring to offer her subjects the solace of their own heritage by including motifs—birds and flowers, Buddhist iconography—from traditional Chinese painting.

Liu purchases a new studio in Oakland.

2000

Where is Mao? 2000 is exhibited at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand. During a discussion with students, Liu is asked what it feels like to be an American “after being Chinese.” She replies: “China is my homeland. An American is something I’m always becoming—it’s a verb.”¹

She participates in *Text and Subtext—Contemporary Art and Asian Women*, a show that travels over three years from Singapore to Sydney, Stockholm, Oslo, Copenhagen, Taipei, and Beijing.

In December, Liu makes her first trip to Russia, where her work is exhibited in a group exhibition. Outside Saint Petersburg, she sees the wintery, melancholy landscapes of Alexei Savrasov and the historical epics of Ilya Repin, painters she has studied since childhood.

2001

A U.S. spy plane collides with a Chinese fighter plane and makes an emergency landing in Hainan, China. The Chinese pilot is killed, and the U.S. crew is detained for ten days.

Liu’s father-in-law, Don Kelley, dies in Las Vegas.

Liu awakens to a radio report that the World Trade Center towers in New York are on fire. In the aftermath of 9/11, she paints *September*, which depicts a traditionally rendered Song Dynasty duck crashing through the face of a young Chinese bride.

In the wake of 9/11, Liu explores the themes of annunciation and lamentation.



Hung Liu
September, 2001
Oil on canvas, 66 × 66 in. (167.6 × 167.6 cm)
Collection of Driek and Michael Zirinsky

2002

Strange Fruit: New Paintings by Hung Liu is organized by the Arizona State University Art Museum and the Boise Art Museum. The exhibition presents depictions of Korean “comfort women,” famine victims, and prisoners of war (see cat. 30).

Liu exhibits in *Art/Women/California: Parallels and Intersections, 1950–2000*, at the San José Museum of Art.

Liu works with her mother to publish her grandfather’s book (see Moss essay, figs. 12, 13).

2003

The United States invades Iraq.

Responding to the exhibition *Hung Liu: Towards Peng-Lai* (Paradise) at the Rena Bransten Gallery in San Francisco, critic Kenneth Baker writes: “Many modern artists have proclaimed painting a realm of freedom, but too little contemporary work makes us feel the truth of this view. . . . Hung Liu’s new work at Bransten does.”²

Liu paints *Mission Girls*, a series of twenty-nine small canvases based on an archival image (see cats. 32–40).

2004

Liu’s beloved aunt—Liu Zongyu—dies in a senior care facility outside Beijing.

Liu exhibits in China for the first time since her departure in 1984. The exhibition, *Hung Liu: Lament*, is presented at Art Scene Warehouse in Shanghai.

2005

In response to a request from the Sun Valley Center for the Arts and Humanities, Liu paints a group of portraits based on archival photographs of Chinese immigrants who were living in Idaho during the nineteenth-century Gold Rush. The resulting exhibition, *The Vanishing: Re-presenting the Chinese in the American West*, features Polly Bemis as the primary subject (see cat. 43).

Liu accompanies Kelley and writer Bill Fox on a sojourn up the Yangtze River, where they meet up with Liu Xiaodong, who is at work on a group portrait of male peasant laborers.

Liu paints *Modern Time* (see Lippard essay, fig. 7), a pseudo-propaganda-style diptych that contrasts two dreams: the trance of the Marxist worker and an artist’s reverie.

2006

Matriarchy: Hung Liu’s New Work opens at Art Scene China Warehouse in Shanghai.

While in China, Liu travels with her mother and husband back to Qianshan. Known in English as “One Thousand Lotus Flower Peaks,” the region features Buddhist and Taoist monasteries dating to ancient times.

Liu takes painting students from Mills College to Beijing, where they visit the studios of Ai Weiwei, Liu Xiaodong, Yu Hong, Sui Jianguo, Wang Gongxin, Lin Tianmiao, and other prominent Chinese artists.

Liu’s *Going Away, Coming Home*, a 160-foot-long window mural, is installed in the new terminal of the Oakland International Airport (see p. 173). In designing the work, Liu combined the crane imagery from a twelfth-century Chinese silk painting (*Auspicious Cranes*) with digitized images from satellite weather maps of the U.S. West Coast and the Asia-Pacific region. The windows quickly become one of Liu’s most popular works.

Liu invites Liu Xiaodong to speak at Mills College. During the visit, the two artists complete blind, simultaneous portraits of each other (they watch each other watching each other painting each other) and exchange the results.

2007

Liu turns to the Chinese propaganda film *Daughters of China* (1949) as she embarks on a new series. Each painting represents a single frame from the film, which tells the true story of a detachment of Chinese women soldiers who, in 1938, carried their dying and wounded into a river to drown as a way to keep them from surrendering to the Japanese (Lippard essay, fig. 12).

Daughters of China is exhibited at Rena Bransten Gallery in San Francisco.

Hung Liu: ZZ (Bastard Paintings) opens at Nancy Hoffman Gallery in New York. The show represents the most ambitious expression to date of Liu's mixed media and resin pieces created in collaboration with David Salgado of Trillium Graphics.

2008

On May 12, the day before Liu arrives in Beijing, a devastating earthquake strikes the Sichuan Province of China. Measuring a magnitude of 7.9, the Sichuan earthquake kills nearly ninety thousand people (according to the final official Chinese government assessment), including many children who were attending school in poorly constructed buildings.

Daughters of China travels to F2 Gallery in Beijing.

Liu presents *Tai Cang (Great Granary)* at the Xin Beijing Art Gallery. The exhibition centers around a reinvention of Liu's 1981 mural, *Music of the Great Earth* (now destroyed). Accompanied by a number of Liu's other

paintings, the new mural hangs on a refurbished wall of the fourteenth-century Imperial Granary, while thirty-four antique wooden containers (*dou*), filled with grains and spices from every province in China, are deployed across the gallery floor.

Liu's mother, Liu Zongguang, completes *Rainbow over the Pacific*, a book on her daughter's life and art.

Liu's work is exhibited at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) in *Half-Life of a Dream: Contemporary Chinese Art from the Logan Collection*, an exhibition curated by Jeff Kelley.

On August 8, the Beijing Summer Olympics open with a globally televised extravaganza that reminds Liu of political pageants from revolutionary China.

The Great Recession begins in the United States.

Rat Years is exhibited at the Walter Maciel Gallery in Los Angeles. A series of portraits depicting the artist at twelve-year intervals from infancy to sixty years of age, *Rat Years* contrasts each self-portrait with an image from a drawing or painting done by the artist in that same year.



Hung Liu
Rat Year II 2008, 2008
Oil on linen and mixed media on wood panel, 60 × 100 in.
(152.4 × 254 cm)

2009

Liu and Kelley attend the presidential inauguration of Barack Obama in Washington, D.C.

Liu devotes herself to a series of paintings depicting people in the aftermath of the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. The subject of these paintings is less the disaster itself than the expressions of mythic emotions on the faces of the survivors: grief, shock, confusion, stunned silence, courage, and mourning.

Liu attends an art education conference in her hometown, Changchun. This is the first time she has returned to the “dead city” since her family fled the Communist forces in 1948.

Paintings from the *Daughters of China* series are exhibited at the 10 Chancery Lane Gallery in Hong Kong.

Liu donates her little painting box—the one she used in China before coming to the United States—to the Oakland Museum of California.

2010

Liu is awarded an honorary doctorate from the Laguna College of Art and Design.

While Liu is visiting with her mother in Beijing, her mother-in-law, Rosemary Kelley, dies in Maine.

As the year ends, Liu’s mother falls ill in Beijing and enters Tongren Hospital.

2011

Liu Zongguang dies in Beijing on January 29, and her ashes are later scattered in the ocean off the coast of Kauai.

Liu is awarded the SGC International Lifetime Achievement Award for Printmaking.

First Spring Thunder opens at the Alexander Ochs Gallery in Beijing. Some of China’s most prominent artists—including Fang Lijun, Liu Xiaodong, Yu Hong, Yang Shaobin, Lin Tianmiao, Wang Gongxin, and Zhan Wang—attend the opening.

(re)*Pressed Memories*, a mini-retrospective of Liu’s prints, opens at the Tamarind Institute in Albuquerque.

Liu speaks at the International Conference on Chinese Women and Visual Representation held in Shanghai. It is the first feminist conference in China to openly welcome lesbians. The title of Liu’s talk is “From Mulan to the Red Detachment of Women.”

The Hung Liu Endowed Fellowship—an annual award for an outstanding graduate student of fine arts—is established at Mills College.

2012

One year after her mother’s death, Liu completes a series of fifty-one small paintings over a mourning period that lasts forty-nine days (see Lippard essay, figs. 2–4).

Ling Chen marries Juan Yu, and Liu meets her Chinese daughter-in-law.

In a striking change, Liu begins a body of paintings that are based on the patriotic stories in Chinese picture books, or *xiaorensu*.

Liu enters her final year of teaching at Mills College.

2013

On March 16, *Summoning Ghosts: The Art of Hung Liu* opens at the Oakland Museum of California. One of the most important exhibitions of Liu's career, it features more than sixty-five works. Large-scale paintings, photographs, sketchbooks, and informal painting studies are gathered from private and public collections around the world. The California governor attends the opening, and in a *Wall Street Journal* review of the show, the critic David Littlejohn deems Liu "the greatest Chinese painter in the U.S."³

On the heels of *Summoning Ghosts*, Liu creates a vast mural and installation for the San José Museum of Art: *Questions from the Sky: New Work by Hung Liu*. A very personal and poignant installation comprising several elegant video works and a sweeping (twenty-by-eighty-foot) wall mural, the work contemplates the cycles of life and death and the span of memory. Its title alludes to an ancient poem by Ch'ü Yüan.

During a residency at PV Studio in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, Liu paints *Portraits of a Chinese Self*, a group of eight self-portraits that show her from age three to thirty-two.

She completes *Qianshan: Grandfather's Mountain* using photographs that Liu Weihua commissioned during his research trips to the mountainous region. The finished paintings incorporate the landscape, religious sites or shrines, the monks and nuns who lived there, and, very often, her grandfather.

2014

Following her retirement from Mills College, Liu acquires the status of professor emerita.

She meets civil rights icon and Congressman John Lewis at the Sun Valley Writers' Conference.

October 26 marks the thirtieth anniversary of Liu's arrival in the United States.

Summoning Ghosts opens at the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City.

2015

Summoning Ghosts opens at the Palm Springs Art Museum.

The Asian Art Museum of San Francisco displays three of Liu's paintings from its collection.

Map No. 33, Liu's bold, multimedia artwork in the Esplanade Ballroom Lobby of the Moscone Center in San Francisco, is de-installed as the Moscone Center itself is soon to be demolished and rebuilt. Liu's larger-than-life re-creation of the first survey map of San Francisco, drawn in 1839 by Jean-Jacques Vioget, was originally installed in 1992, when the Moscone Center was new. The work's forty-one canvases, shaped to conform to the historic map's city blocks, charted the young port town of San Francisco when it was still a village, newly renamed from the original "Yerba Buena."

After spending time in the Dorothea Lange Archive at the Oakland Museum of California, Liu begins to make paintings based on Lange's photographs, shifting away from her decades-long focus on historical Chinese subjects.

2016



Hung Liu
Spare Tire, 2018
Oil on canvas, 80 × 70 in. (203.2 × 177.8 cm)
Collection of Lorna Meyer Calas and Dennis Calas

Liu and Kelley lead an art trip to China for members of the San José Museum of Art. They attend Art Basel in Hong Kong before traveling to Shanghai and Beijing to visit studios, galleries, and museums. They meet Uli Sigg, Urs Meile, and Arne Glimcher, among other collectors and gallerists, and visit artists Liu Xiaodong, Zhang Huan, Qiu Anxiong, Liu Jianhua, Li Songsong, Song Dong, Qiu Zhijie, Zhang Xiaogang, Wang Gongxin and Lin Tianmiao, Yang Shaobin, Fang Lijun, Yu Hong, Sui Jianguo, Yue Minjun, and Zhao.

She presents *Daughters of China* at the American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center, in Washington, D.C. The presentation of two bodies of work, *Daughters of China* and *Jiu Jin Shan*, feels remarkably relevant given its proximity in time and place to the U.S. national election, which is focused on the politics of immigration and on the (heroic) possibility of a woman president.

On November 8, Donald J. Trump is elected president of the United States.

2017

Liu delivers a speech at the Women's March in San Francisco.

The exhibition *Hung Liu: Scales of History*, at the Fresno Art Museum, juxtaposes thirty-four of Liu's small-scale *My Secret Freedom* paintings, from the early 1970s, with a selection of her larger works, made after she immigrated to the United States.

Liu partially repaints *Reading Room*, her mural in the community room of the Kuo Building in San Francisco's Chinatown. Originally executed in 1988, the work is preserved and realigned to accommodate design changes in the building.

Liu and Kelley spend a week in residence at the Oxbow School in Napa, working with high school artists.

Liu exhibits a group of her Dorothea Lange-inspired paintings at Rena Bransten Gallery in San Francisco.



Hung Liu delivers a speech at the Women's March in San Francisco, January 21, 2017.

2018

Liu is invited to design an issue of *Zoetrope: All-Story*, the film director Francis Ford Coppola's quarterly literary magazine. Taking a cue from the process of writing itself, of shaping and extending a narrative, Liu decides to publish her most recent paintings, which are based on Dorothea Lange's documentary photographs.

Liu shows her *Secret Freedom* paintings at Walter Maciel Gallery in Los Angeles (see Lim essay, fig. 5, and Lippard essay, fig. 5).

Liu, in conjunction with David Salgado of Trillium Graphics, donates fifty-one resin paintings to the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art at the University of Oregon in Eugene. Working with Tonya Turner Carroll of Turner Carroll Gallery in Santa Fe, she also begins the process of funding an endowment at the university to reward innovative student artists.

Liu is formally invited by Kim Sajet, director of the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C., to have a one-woman show of her portrait-focused works at the museum in 2021.

For the first time at its annual gala, the San José Museum of Art honors an artist: Hung Liu.

Liu shows at SFMOMA in *Art and China after 1989: Theater of the World*. Organized by the Guggenheim Museum and having traveled to Bilbao before SFMOMA, the exhibition features *Avant-Garde* (cat. 20).

2019

As part of a lecture series at SFMOMA focusing on contemporary Chinese art, in association with *Theater of the World*, Liu discusses her experiences of having lived in China during the Cultural Revolution.

Philip Tinari, director of the UCCA Center for Contemporary Art in Beijing, invites Liu to exhibit there at the end of 2019.

Liu is appointed to the board of trustees at the San José Museum of Art.

At the Nevada Museum of Art, Liu joins artist Zhi Lin in a discussion on the sacrifices of Chinese railroad workers who raced to complete the U.S. rail lines in 1869. Following their remarks, a ceremonial gathering takes place at the exact time 150 years prior that the "golden spike" was hammered into the last rail at Promontory, Utah, by Leland Stanford. Liu and Zhi then recite the names of over eight hundred known Chinese railroad workers. This somber, contemplative recitation is accompanied by the playing of traditional Chinese instruments as the audience gazes westward at the vast Sierra Nevada through which the Chinese workers cut the tunnels of the Union Pacific.

Liu attends Judy Chicago's eightieth birthday celebration in Belen, New Mexico, where the artists meet for the first time. Chicago says, "You've made history," to which Liu replies, "I'm surprised you know who I am."

SFMOMA, with the guidance of Gary Garrels, senior curator of painting and sculpture, acquires all of Liu's *My Secret Freedom* paintings.

Liu continues her focus on Dorothea Lange's subjects as they migrate across the United States in the 1930s in search of work, dignity, and salvation. The title of her exhibition *This Land . . .*, at the Nancy Hoffman Gallery in New York, invokes Woody Guthrie's anthem of 1940 but does not offer the ribbons of highway, the golden valleys, or the diamond deserts. Instead, Liu presents a landscape of broken-down cars, flattened tires, and stranded people.

In New York, Liu connects with fellow Chinese painter Li Songsong, who is presenting an exhibition at Pace Gallery.

On November 14, Liu's show *Hung Liu: Passer-by* is canceled by the Beijing municipal Bureau of Culture. Originally scheduled to open at UCCA on December 6, it is canceled when UCCA does not receive the necessary government approvals to import Liu's works from the United States to China. In essence, the Beijing government censors Liu's entire show. The reasons remain unclear, but it probably relates to the history of twentieth-century ideological struggle embodied in Liu's work.

The year ends with a "Cancellation Party" at the Piedmont home of Liu's dear friend Mary Ellen Herringer. Many friends show up: artists, curators and museum directors; dealers from San Francisco, Los Angeles, Santa Fe, and Ketchum; Phil Tinari from UCCA—all the way from China. The party takes place on the day Liu's Beijing show was scheduled to open. The art world press has covered the censorship, and major articles appear in the *New York Times*, *Artforum*, *Art News*, *The Art Newspaper*, *artnet News*, and more.

2020

Another Year of the Rat—Liu's year—dawns, and the hovering, prickly threat of the coronavirus is in the air. Liu has been to Wuhan, where the excavated bronze bells referred to in her 1981 CAFA mural are conserved and exhibited.

On March 4, California Governor Gavin Newsom declares a state of emergency, and a shelter-in-place order is issued for the Bay Area on March 17.

Liu is appointed to the board of trustees of SFMOMA.

She invents a new form of composing called “ensemble paintings,” in which people and things from Lange’s photographs are digitally plucked from their chemical grounds and printed on shaped wood, aluminum, and canvas. These images are then painted and reordered into new compositions, suggesting fresh narratives in the lives, belongings, and shelters of these Dust Bowl migrants.

She is offered an updated version of the canceled Beijing show at the de Young Museum in San Francisco, scheduled for 2021.

Hong Kong is essentially taken back by China.

A new “Rat” is born to Ling Chen Kelley and Juan Yu: Casimir (“Cas”) Arthur Kelley. Hung Liu is a grandma.

She prepares for her major exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C.

Notes

1. Hung Liu quoted in *Summoning Ghosts: The Art of Hung Liu*, by René de Guzman et al. (Oakland, Calif.: Oakland Museum of California; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 194.
2. Kenneth Baker, “Shedding Shackles of History and Style,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 3, 2003.
3. David Littlejohn, “The Evils That Men Do,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 6, 2013.

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Oil on linen and mixed media on wood panel, each: 64 × 100 in. (162.6 × 254 cm), diptych





Handwritten text in Arabic script, arranged in vertical columns on a purple background. The text is written in black ink and appears to be a religious or philosophical passage.