

For Glory and For Love
Augustina Wang

Sow & Tailor is proud to present *For Glory and For Love*, the debut solo exhibition by New York-based artist Augustina Wang (b. 1999, New York, NY, USA), on view from April 15th to May 13th, 2023. An opening reception for the artist will be held on April 15th from 2pm-5pm.

*To whom do lions cast their gentle looks?
Not to the beast that would usurp their den.
The smallest worm will turn being trodden on,
And doves will peck in safeguard of their brood.*

The English-language phrase “Even a worm will turn,” was adopted from the above lines by Lord Clifford in William Shakespeare’s *Henry VI*; the expression conveys the message that even the weakest of creatures will retaliate and seek revenge when pushed too far. As an Asian woman and survivor of assault, Augustina Wang has firsthand experience with the ways society dehumanizes women in her community and relegates them to the margins. In her latest body of work, Asian femmes occupy a fantasy world, embodying roles not normally assigned to them, in which they are powerful protagonists in an epic battle for justice and retribution.

The characters in *For Glory and For Love* embrace both the feminine and the masculine – depicted as soft and delicate on the one hand, and dominant and impenetrable on the other. Wang’s femmes expose their breasts, have long, flowing hair, elaborate nails, and rosy cheeks while also wearing pieces of armor, carrying swords, and flexing muscles in their battles with evil forces. This duality is most present in *Titan 2: Vored*, where a young woman on the ground is being devoured by a serpent. Her sensuous curves stretch out the serpent’s body while another figure comes to her rescue, tightly squeezing the serpent’s tale and accentuating a muscular nude body. They live in a fantastical world Wang has created for them – a world in which women tap into their inner powers and unleash their feminine rage.

This make-believe world is adopted from online personas and video games. Rather than remain meek and docile, which Wang notes are traits expected of Asian women, the figures in her paintings embody a main character complex. Internet spaces dedicated to fanfiction, roleplaying, and video games provide a proxy of power, thereby allowing young women an opportunity to escape their subjugation. The motif of the sword, seen in several of the paintings and displayed as a stand-alone object in the gallery space, references this cosplay. Like Wang’s canvases, these performative forums present young women in the guise of warriors with superhuman capabilities. This roleplay is empowering, allowing Wang and her characters to challenge the inherited sexism and misogyny that colors their lives.

For Glory and For Love also presents an opportunity for Wang to explore her creative process. In the diptych *Poet*, a young woman appears to submerge the head of another into a body of water; the victim looks upwards and out at the viewer in distress. In this bucolic landscape, a poet is seated on the grass watching the assault while writing in her journal. Rather than help, the poet is a passive bystander. For Wang, this disturbing scene is a metacritique or metanarrative of her practice; as a survivor, bystander, and narrator of violence, Wang must bear witness to trauma yet disassociate from it during her art-making process. Through this, Wang flirts with the edges and boundaries of self-love, healing, and passion for her craft, exploring desire and the idealization of justice.

Text by Tina Barouti

Augustina Wang (b. 1999, New York, NY, USA) was formally trained in painting at the Rhode Island School of Design (BFA, 2022). Through her practice, Wang explores her historically subjugated identity as an Asian femme and first-generation Chinese American woman. Through strategies such as worldbuilding, roleplaying power, and creating lore, Wang's paintings are mechanisms for healing both self-inflicted and generational trauma. Wang cites her childhood self as inspiration; as a young girl, she perused roleplaying blogs, fanfiction forums, and video game sites to practice agency and participate in community in a world where both things were lacking.

Wang has had several group exhibitions at Thierry Goldberg Gallery, New York (2023); Sow & Tailor, Los Angeles (2023, 2022); Vollery Gallery, Dubai (2023), and with New American Paintings (2023). She has previously participated in group exhibitions at Cierra Britton Gallery, New York (2022); New Image Gallery, Los Angeles (2022); The Japanese American Cultural and Community Center, Los Angeles (2022); RISD Memorial Hall, Providence (2022); Carr Haus, Providence (2022); Providence Public Library, Providence (2022); and RISD Woods-Gerry Gallery, Providence (2022). She was the recipient of the RISD's Florence Leif Award (2022) and will be in residence at Moosey Art in England in the summer of 2023. Her work is included in forthcoming publications by *B0000000m* and New American Paintings.