

## Crystal Liu

*too soon for so long*

October 13 – November 12, 2022



Morgan Lehman is pleased to present “too soon for so long,” an exhibition of paintings on paper and silk by Crystal Liu. This marks the artist’s second solo exhibition with the gallery.

Crystal Liu’s primary muse is nature. She revels in its beauty, mystery, and capricious power. The artist draws directly from the history of traditional Chinese landscape painting while leaving space for her own fantastic imaginings to take over. Elements such as the earth and sky, the moon and stars, flora, fauna, and water all intermingle on a single flat perspectival plane to create serene yet uncanny vistas. Liu is interested in using landscape as a metaphor for the intangible forces that drive human beings from within: she often looks to her own daily life experiences, her relationships, and her curiosity to learn more about the complexities of human behavior and emotions as raw material for each piece.

“our place” is the series of paintings on paper, created after the sudden loss of Liu’s father during the beginning of the pandemic. After he passed away, she sought comfort from her long walks in nature. Flowers in particular, helped her heal and be more hopeful so she created a dream garden for the two of them to meet. This garden, full of white chrysanthemums, poppies, forget-me-nots, bluebells, and echinacea is a dreamscape where two moons can co-exist, endless stars twinkle in the garden and flowers can thrive and bloom up in the clouds. These various flower species, rendered in exquisite detail and the artist’s boldest use of color to date, point to larger ideas including loss, everlasting love, promises to remember, and strength in the face of adversity.

Liu’s silk works titled, “catch the light” are a quietly minimal contemplation of two spaces: the world of dreams and the mysterious realm of the afterlife. White chrysanthemums, painted with gouache, ink, and Chinese watercolors are the main characters. Each piece features dazzling abalone veneer and gold leaf. This natural shell introduces a truly otherworldly element to the visual mix, reflecting and refracting light when viewed from different angles.

In all the works included in this exhibition, Liu unites the tradition of Chinese landscape painting with a highly conceptual framework to charge the artworks with a distinct personal narrative. This framework invites the viewer to look for their own symbolic interpretation, as well as derive comfort, healing, and insight, from Liu’s dreamlike and astonishing world.

**Crystal Liu** was born in Toronto, Canada, in 1980 to Chinese immigrants. Liu majored in photography at Ontario College of Art & Design and received an MFA at the San Francisco Art Institute in 2005. Her work is included in collections including the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (California); the US Embassy Beijing Art Collection (China); the City of San Francisco (California); the Progressive Art Collection (Ohio); and The Fidelity Art Collection (Boston), among others. Liu lives and works in California.