

UC SANTA BARBARA

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[Debra Herrick](#)

‘Positive Exposure: SoCal Asian American Art’ exhibit features UCSB grad student and alumni artists

“Positive Exposure: Southern California Asian American Art,” a multi-media art exhibition currently on view at [TAG Gallery, Los Angeles \(May 4-24\)](#) shines a spotlight on numerous UC Santa Barbara student and alumni artists. The exhibition offers a nuanced presentation of the diverse and intergenerational voices within the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) artistic community.

“Spanning different mediums — drawing, painting, photography, sculpture, video, performance and 3D technology — the works demonstrate the personal visual language of each artist through the embrace and exploration of one’s own heritage as well as their unique relationship with Southern California,” said Sophia Quach McCabe, who received her doctorate in art history from UCSB in 2019, and co-curated the show with artists Joyce Hayashi of Project Space DTLA and Shirley Asano Guldemann of TAG Gallery, Los Angeles.

“As a Chinese-American curator, I’m excited to support these artists and continue uplifting multicultural voices and stories in museums and the art world in order to create spaces of belonging for everyone,” added McCabe, an independent curator and art historian, who was a Fulbright Fellow at the Herzog August Bibliothek and a recipient of the Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation grant. Her research, publications and exhibitions have spanned Renaissance and contemporary art, including an

upcoming exhibition she curated at the Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens in San Marino.

The AAPI community is not a monolith, McCabe said, adding that she hopes “Positive Exposure” will help audiences see the artists as individuals with varied talents, interests and backgrounds. The exhibition, which has been shown in two parts, features current and alumni UCSB MFA students including Kio Griffith '20; Dani Kwan '23; Yumiko Glover '17; Dannah Mari Hidalgo '24, Alina Kawai '21; Lyra Purugganan '24, College of Creative Studies alum Irene Suh '22; and Eun-Ha Paek, 2023 Expressive Computation Lab artist in residence.

This intersection of personal background and historical context is seen in Dannah Mari Hidalgo’s painting “It's in the Garage,” McCabe explained. Describing the painting as examining “the inclination and consequences of hoarding among Asian American and immigrant households,” McCabe reiterated Hidalgo’s statement: “The intrusion of the idealistic American Home coupled with my childhood lens resulted in resentment. Through time and distance, my understanding of my family’s hoarding has evolved to view it as an internalized survival mechanism of my immigrant parents.”

On the other hand, McCabe noted that Alina Kawai’s “Waiting on the Roof with Butterflies,” “evokes feelings of solitude and introspection while connecting to her Japanese-heritage artistic models, such as Jiro Yoshihara from the Gutai art movement.”

Focused on AAPI art and experiences, the exhibitions also offered opportunities for artists to further connect within the AAPI artistic community.

“For AAPI artists, an amazing supportive community awaits you,” McCabe said, “What became immediately apparent during both opening receptions (Project Space DTLA in October 2023 and TAG Gallery in May 2024) was how younger artists connected with older artists and vice versa; and how artists — who knew each other by name only — finally met. The exhibition provided a space for new artists to learn from established artists, and for established artists to encourage emerging artists and to see what they are learning and doing to make art their own.”

Born in Kanagawa, Japan and based in Los Angeles and Yokohama, Japan, [Kio Griffith](#) is an interdisciplinary artist, independent curator, educator and arts writer working across themes of social issues, geopolitics and migrating cultures, through multimodal, craft and technology-based works. He currently teaches at Tama Art University in Tokyo.

[Eun-Ha Paek](#) was born in Seoul, Korea and received her BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design. Her animated films have screened in the Guggenheim Museum, Sundance Film Festival and venues internationally. She teaches at Parsons School of Design and Greenwich House Pottery.

[Yumiko Glover's](#) artwork incorporates a range of inspirations taken from her cross-cultural experiences in Japan and the United States. [Her work](#) has been exhibited at the Los Angeles International Airport, Honolulu Museum of Art, Shangri-La Museum of Islamic Art, Culture & Design and iBiennale 2019 in Honolulu, Hawai'i, among other institutions. She currently teaches in UCSB's Department of Art.

[Dannah Mari Hidalgo](#) is a Filipina-American artist based in California and Oahu, Hawai'i, where she was born and raised. Her work often explores daily life experiences and relationships while deconstructing space — often coupling figurative and representational work with abstract activation through paint.

[Alina Kawai](#) is a visual artist born in Hyōgo, Japan. Many of her works focus on color, form and symbols. Her paintings inquire one's connections to a broader culture and become introspective quiet spaces. Kawai's works are in the permanent collection of the Hawaii State Art Museum and Ke Kilohana Building in Hawai'i.

[Lyra Purugganan](#) is an interdisciplinary artist born in Manila, Philippines. Influenced by craft and materials, queer culture and the midwest DIY music scene, Purugganan explores selfhood and their intersecting identities, disrupting systems through the misuse and misplacement of materials. Through performance, ceramics, installation, ornament and sculpture, they explore the complexities of girlhood and femininity, celebrating queerness and its intersectionalities.

[Dani Kwan](#) is an interdisciplinary artist, graphic designer and educator working with a diverse range of media including textiles, video, ceramics, photography and print.

Their work has been shown most recently at Betteravia Gallery in Santa Maria, the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, and the Downtown Oxnard Improvement Association. They are the current artist in residence at UC Santa Barbara and teach art and photography at CSU Channel Islands and Ventura Community College.

Irene Suh is a freelance artist and teaching art assistant/administrator in San Jose. Her Asian American Studies minor informs her paintings, prints and multimedia collages. In these works, she brings together people and nature while simultaneously expressing the rich Korean culture that is her heritage.

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About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.