

## NEWS

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## Artist and Activist Chanel Miller Makes Debut at Asian Art Museum with *I Was, I Am, I Will Be*



San Francisco August 9 — As part of its transformation and expansion, the Asian Art Museum is unveiling the first museum exhibition of Chanel Miller’s visual art and process drawings. Best known for her book, *Know My Name* (2019)—in which she revealed herself to be the Emily Doe whose searing statement in her 2016 Stanford assault trial brought critical attention to lenient sentencing—Miller considers her visual arts practice to be the foremost expression of her work and activism around healing.

The museum has installed large vinyl renderings of the triptych, *Chanel Miller: I was, I am, I will be*, in the Brayton Wilbur Foundation Gallery, a gallery overlooking Hyde Street in the new Akiko Yamazaki and Jerry Yang Pavilion. These images will be visible both day and night through the gallery’s long, faceted windows. Miller’s process drawings and sketches will be presented across the street from the museum in the San Francisco Main Library (when it is able to reopen for in-person service). The Library has selected Miller’s *Know My Name* for its 2021 One City One Book citywide literary event.

*I was, I am, I will be* (detail), 2020, by Chanel Miller (American, b. 1992). Process color print on vinyl. Commissioned by the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, courtesy of the artist. © Chanel Miller. Image © Asian Art Museum of San Francisco.

“I think a lot about healing through my work. Art requires imagination, and imagination is the key ingredient to empathy. That’s the power of art, it’s letting people see how you move through the world and what experiences you’ve endured and how that’s shaped who you are today,” says Miller, a Bay Area native whose mother was born in China. “Growing up in Palo Alto, my mom would always take us to the Asian Art Museum, and I hope any visitors who come through will see my work and say, ‘maybe this is possible for me, too.’”

The “characters” in *I was, I am, I will be* represent different stages of coping with the uncertainties and challenges of life — “unfinished sentences,” as the artist calls them, encouraging visitors to reflect on their own experiences.



“The tenderness of her figures, their knowing yet emotionally open features, the strength of her commitment to togetherness and community as curative, make Miller’s works universally relatable in this strange moment of politics and pandemic,” says exhibition organizer Abby Chen, head of contemporary art at the Asian Art Museum. “Imagining busy Hyde Street as a public platform for expressions of hope is exactly the message of resilience people across this city, this country, and the world, need right now.”



Miller’s artwork was originally scheduled to be on view in early May at the museum and later in the year at the Library, but installation was postponed due to the COVID-19 crisis. The museum and the Main Library are currently closed to the public, while both organizations are working on plans to reopen once clear guidelines are in place for how best to protect visitors and ensure they enjoy a comfortable, fun, inspiring, and above all, safe, experience.

Top: Chanel Miller, portrait courtesy of the artist.

Bottom: Akiko Yamazaki and Jerry Yang Pavilion Rendering 2020 © Asian Art Museum and wHY.

"We transformed the Asian Art Museum precisely so we could share more contemporary art, and more kinds of contemporary art, than ever before," says Jay Xu, Barbara Bass Bakar Director and CEO of the Asian Art Museum. "The quiet, but forceful optimism of Miller's drawings functions as a potent reminder that there are many ways to make your voice heard, and not just heard, but resonate far and wide. It's a message we all need as part of our recovery from this period of loss, pain, and fear."

*I was, I am, I will be* can best be experienced after dark when the gallery will be specially illuminated, creating a literal "beacon" for passersby. The artwork is currently scheduled to be on view through February 2022 (subject to change due to considerations associated with the COVID-19 pandemic), accompanied by other major commissioned murals on the pavilion façade from artists Jas Charanjiva (*Don't Mess With Me*) and Jenifer K Wofford (*Pattern Recognition*) that address critical social issues like street harassment and the underrepresentation of Asian American artists.

## Exhibition Organization

*Chanel Miller: I was, I am, I will be* is a part of the *Asian American Experience*, which is made possible with the generous support of Glen S. and Sakie T. Fukushima, an anonymous donor in memory of Ambassador and Mrs. Sampson Shen, and Claudine Cheng.

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