

# ART AND CAKE

A Contemporary Art Magazine with a Focus on the Los Angeles Art Scene

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## The Sublime Beauty of Leigh Salgado and Ching Ching Cheng

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Leigh Salgado and Ching Ching Cheng. Launch LA. Photo Credit Kristine Schomaker

## The Sublime beauty of Leigh Salgado and Ching Ching Cheng

By Genie Davis

It would be hard to find two more inventive, intensely feminine, and sublimely assertive artists than Leigh Salgado and Ching Ching Cheng. You can see their work through December 3rd at Launch LA.

Los Angeles-based Salgado's "Love in All the Right Places" is delicate lace and vivid color, images of abstract flowers and petals, intricate mixed media work that involves meticulously cutting paper with an X-Acto knife. Salgado discovered this essential aspect of her technique in the 90s when she used an X-Acto knife to cut away areas of her work that she did not like. The memories and inspiration of other women and her own feminine experience has been refined as the artist redefines what it means to be a "girl."

Taking on the common trivializing of female objects, Salgado creates a passionate play on the all-too-frequently denigrated female image; from the attire itself to the work behind creating it. This may indeed be “women’s work,” and the undergarments depicted sensually feminine, but there is no trivialization of it, rather there is strength in the layered, enchanting beauty. There is freedom and frivolity in the lacy, color-rich garments, but also a fierceness, a constraint in the girdles and bras and corsets. Witness her 2013 “Birdcage” in which the lushly floral corset is metal, a gorgeous prison, a stunning confinement, something it takes strength to wear and a fight to remove. Her 2016 piece, “Vikki,” depicts bra and panties, made up of delicate flowers with a pattern on the left half of the titular subject’s bra, all with a mysteriously swirling paisley pattern behind it. Likewise, also from 2016, “Tori” is the image of a bra and panties, with ephemeral paper lace as the backdrop. Both these pieces, and her “Victoria,” where the flowers are almost star-like in quality, depict something much prouder and profound than beautiful underclothes. Rather, these garments seem almost like battle armor, a fight taken on with pride and love. Wear these and be girded against battles of daily living. The artist’s “Bunch” and “Knot” each depict panties alone, whose colors, textures, and quality of light resemble something magical and strange, something a super-heroine might wear.

Each of Salgado’s works shares something with a floral kaleidoscope, with a turn-of-the-century Valentine, with stained glass in a French cathedral. There are the swirling colors and floral shapes, the sense of love, the idea of sex and sensuality and femininity itself subsumed but not consumed. There is a worshipfulness woven into the fabric she depicts, whether the unseen wearer is seductively unbuttoned in “Look at Me,” or finding her cosmic center in “The A Spot.”



Making a perfect pairing with Salgado is Ching Ching Cheng in her solo exhibition, “Build.” Rather than undergarments, Chen takes on the traditional roles of wife and mother and of feminism and sexism, by creating individual environments through epoxy and resin apron sculptures.

These pieces speak to protection and confinement, possibility even within the traditional. This series takes a very female-centric garment, an apron, and makes it a platform, a sculptural

canvas, that defines and defies both traditional roles and the effect of environment on behavior and ambition. Taiwanese-American, Cheng has a twinned cultural sensibility which she playfully yet powerfully reveals in her works. "Apron Series 32" is delicately floral, a rectangular box, a garden of promise. "Apron Series 34" shows a protective apron as a camera, another way in which to cover and protect oneself. "Apron Series 1" features a delicate ivory bow, a flounce, and evokes the image of a wedding dress. The phrase "tied to her apron strings" comes to mind: referring here to a woman being perhaps both attached and attaching. Her sculptures are moving and alive, captured moments in time, perhaps the moment in which women are breaking free of the ties that bind.

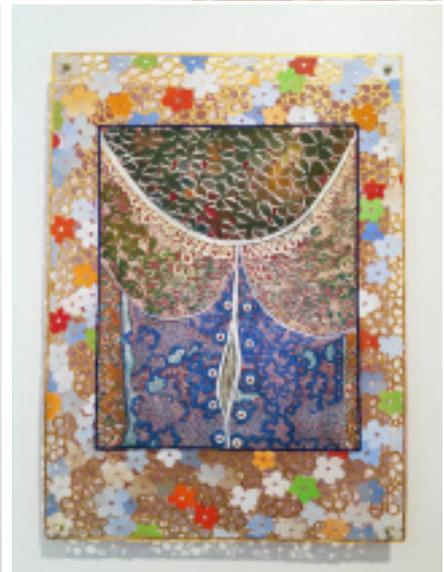


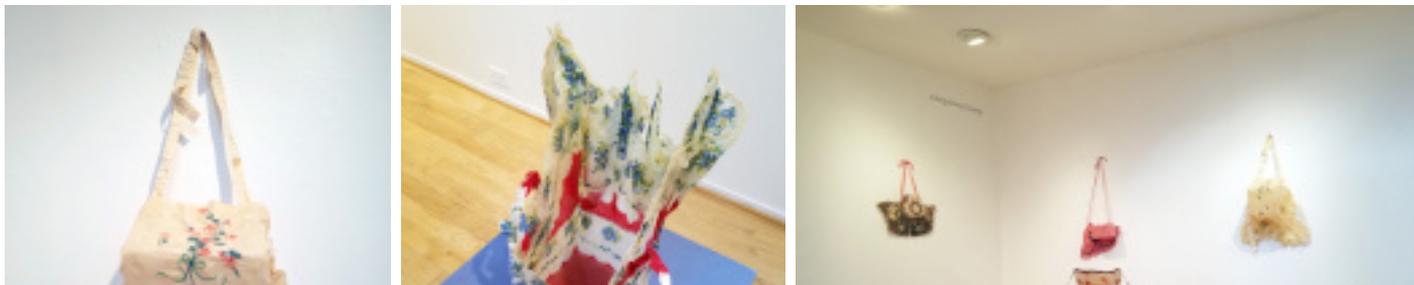
Both Salgado and Chen's works offer a vivid, bountiful construct for possibility, for throwing off our bindings – "our" being that of men and women alike – and also protecting ourselves, whether with the armor of undergarments or the cover of an apron – from the vicissitudes of existence.

Launch is located at 170 S. La Brea Ave. in Los Angeles.









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**Karen Mary Davalos** December 5, 2016 at 1:05 pm

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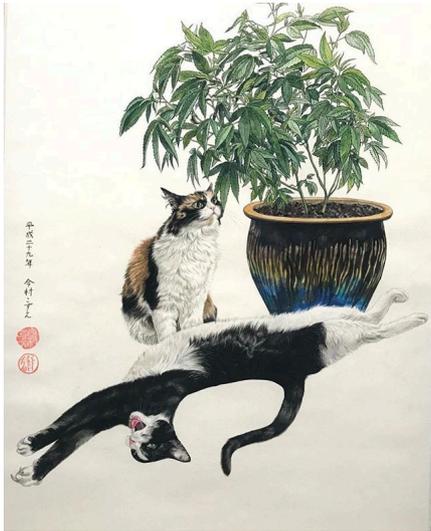
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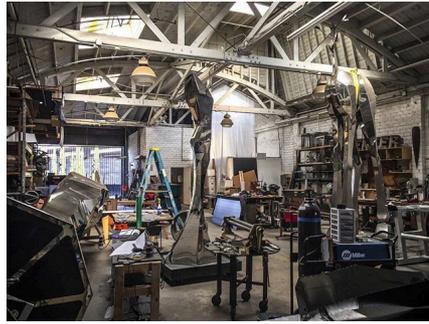
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Susan Joseph. Photo Credit Kristine Schomaker.





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