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CONTACTS:  
Angela Tung (angela@pearlriver.com)  
Joanne Kwong (joanne@pearlriver.com)  
212.431.4770

**PEARL RIVER MART GALLERY AND THE ASIAN AMERICAN ARTS ALLIANCE PRESENT  
'SOFT SOLIDARITY (SoS): UNITING TO PROTECT, EMPOWER, AND HEAL'**

*Art exhibition features the multimedia works of AAPI woman-identifying artists  
with a shared love of contemporary art and traditional craft*

NEW YORK, NY — May 18, 2022 — Presented in partnership with the [Asian American Arts Alliance](#), a not-for-profit dedicated to strengthening AAPI artists and cultural groups through resource sharing, promotion, and community building, and and curated by Joyce Yu-Jean Lee, independent artist and Assistant Professor of Art and Digital Media at Marist College, "[Soft Solidarity \(SoS\): Uniting to Protect, Empower, and Heal](#)" features women-identifying artists who share a love for contemporary art and traditional craft. It spans two sites: Chelsea Market from May 14 through June 6 and the Pearl River Mart Gallery from May 18 through August 28.

The artists' works delve into the idea of "soft solidarity," a kind of loose unity unconstrained by background, location, or socioeconomic status, and how seemingly contrasting attributes can exist simultaneously and in harmony — softness and strength, pliability and power, delicacy and danger.

"The name comes from the idea of how to solidify our community and form allies with one another," said Ms. Lee. "Asians in America are such a disparate group, quite fractured and broad. Soft solidarity, an urban sociological concept written about by a scholar named Mervyn Horgan, is not a concrete allegiance. It's a loose sense of unification, usually informally negotiated in situ.

"While curating the exhibition, I also thought about the political notion of soft power, about being diplomatic rather than aggressively carrying a big stick to reconcile conflict and woo opponents. Moreover, all these artists' works I selected are soft ... visually and in texture. Their shapes are organic and loose. So the show is about genteel yet strong Asian solidarity in a time of trial."

"I was so touched by the idea of 'soft solidarity,'" said Lisa Gold, executive director of the Asian American Arts Alliance. "The concept initially seems like an oxymoron, but like 'loose boundedness,' it makes complete sense when you take it a step further. It embodies contradictions that AAPI women hold as well."

"We're so moved by this exhibition," said Joanne Kwong, president and second-generation owner of Pearl River Mart. "Especially in light of the hate and violence that has been inflicted upon AAPI communities all over the country. 'Soft Solidarity' is a stand against that, and a call for everyone, not just Asian Americans, to come together as we heal and protect ourselves and each other.



“It’s a poignant exhibition to have during Asian Pacific Islander American Heritage Month, which is full of celebration but began as a political movement. This exhibition reminds us of APAHM’s political roots and that it should go on beyond the month of May.”

“Soft Solidarity” is on view in Chelsea Market from May 14 through June 6, and the Pearl River Mart Gallery from May 18 through August 28. Both sites are free and open to the public during business hours.

This is the second art exhibition Pearl River Mart has shown at Chelsea Market, following last year’s “Futures Ever Arriving,” also presented in partnership with the Asian American Arts Alliance, and the 28th at the Pearl River Mart art gallery. The gallery features curated exhibitions with local artists from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds. Previous artists include *New Yorker* magazine cartoonists Amy Hwang, Jeremy Nguyen, Suerynn Lee, Evan Hahn, and more; photographers Louis Chan, Hiroyuki Ito, and Corky Lee; painters Arlan Huang and Kam Mak; illustrators Nancy Pappas, Jerry Ma, Yumi Sakugawa and Felicia Liang; and multimedia artists Wiena Lin, Ben Sloat, and Xin Song. Its recent shows include “Heartmind: Portraits from the Bob Eng Lee and Asian American Arts Centre Collections,” which was presented in collaboration with nonprofit arts organization Think!Chinatown, and “Corky Lee on My Mind: A Photographic Tribute,” dedicated to the legendary photographer and activist Corky Lee (1947–2021).

Press contacts:

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### About the Artists

**aricoco** is interested in how human communities might form and thrive without centralized leadership and power privilege. She hand-sews and weaves protective garments for the female body in imaginary eusocial matriarchal communities that are characterized by cooperative brood care and division of labor. Her costumes, gas masks, and family “crests” reference traditional Japanese kimono and samurai fashion, and are inspired by the biologically-coded, altruistic characteristics of social insects within female-dominated insect collectives like ants, where a fertile Queen is dependent on sterile Workers for her existence while the colony depends on her for its reproduction.

**Suejin Jo** creates abstract swaths of color and shape across canvas with oil and acrylic paint. Her painting process is inspired by the “inlay” process of Korean potters from the 11th century. Helen Harrison of The New York Times described Jo’s painting as having “the character of an ancient wall painting”. Her gestural brush marks, drips and blots vibrate against each other with soulful yet fresh colors. Like the Lascaux cave paintings, her soft forms and curvilinear lines spark the imagination and evoke moods reflecting on the sorrows and joys of the pandemic.



Curator **Joyce Yu-Jean Lee**'s two-channel video *What It's Like, What It Is* is made in homage to the original video installation by Adrian Piper, a famous black female performance artist. Each screen displays words of various racial slurs that Asian Americans have been called by strangers, accompanied by their own words to rebut and reclaim their identity. These charged words represent the intangible ideas, perspectives, and expressions that can both collectively hurt and heal the Asian American community.

**Natalia Nakazawa** weaves tapestries and paints the silhouettes of historic masks and vessels that incorporate public domain images from the online archives of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Her vessels serve as a metaphor for the human body, both historical and contemporary, layering imagery that questions national identities and reframes the global trade of prized porcelain and exotic silk from the East to the West.

**Sui Park** creates three-dimensional biomorphic forms from man-made materials which she calls "Wiggling" series. She repetitively links together plastic cable ties into porous, loose networks that resemble spiky clouds, simultaneously awe-inspiring yet threatening too. These forms represent potential transformation or evolution—wiggling the status quo towards change, an apt visual metaphor for both hostile stereotypes and inclusivity of individuals within a community.

**Lu Zhang**'s intimate ceramic works depict female body parts: a pair of hands taking a pulse, a long black braid on the back of an anonymous head, a pair of fiery red breasts and a miniature person in an inverted frog yoga pose suspended from the ceiling. Her whimsical sculptures draw viewers in to examine how the female body is both characterized yet objectified and commodified in Asian American identity.

### **About the Asian American Arts Alliance**

The Asian American Arts Alliance is a nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring greater representation, equity, and opportunities for Asian American artists and cultural organizations through resource sharing, promotion, and community building.

Since 1983, A4 has sought to unify, promote, and represent the artistic and cultural producers of one of New York City's fastest-growing populations. We are a diverse alliance of artists, organizations, and arts supporters who believe that working together as a pan-ethnic, multidisciplinary community is essential to nurturing the development of artists and arts groups. A4 serves as a thoughtful convener of the Asian American cultural workforce around issues of race, identity, and artmaking and provides a critical voice for this community. We are the only service organization in the country dedicated to the professional development of Asian American artists in all disciplines.

### **About Pearl River Mart**

Celebrating its 50th anniversary, Pearl River Mart was founded as a "friendship store" in 1971. The iconic Asian emporium has locations in New York City's SoHo district, the esteemed Museum of Chinese in



America, and the popular Chelsea Market with both a retail outlet and Pearl River Mart Foods. From home furnishings to fashion to snacks and everything in between, the store features one-of-a-kind items imported from Asia, as well as innovative merchandise designed and created by Asian Americans. A beloved destination for people from all over the globe, Pearl River has become symbolic of the uniqueness, authenticity, and multiculturalism of New York City. Visit [www.PearlRiver.com](http://www.PearlRiver.com) and follow on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) or [Twitter](#).

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