

**Vincent Chong**

*i love you more than you'll ever know*

Skånes konstförening

May 20–June 19

ENGLISH

Performance: *pussy calligraphy*, May 20, 21:00

Artist Talk: May 21, 16:00–17:00

Performance: *tiger bby cvnt*, May 22, 16:00–16:15 (at Inter Arts Center)

## Curatorial Statement

Vincent Chong is a Chinese American artist and community organizer who mixes drag, QTBIPOC (queer and trans Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) club culture, painting, and traditional Chinese calligraphy. This debut solo exhibition is a love letter from Vincent to their fellow diasporic East and Southeast Asian queer and trans community in New York and beyond.

From 5 large-scale paintings to a hand-bound book of 88 watercolors, Vincent uses portraiture to explore their deep abiding love for their community and queer Asian futures. From performance to Chinese calligraphy to painting, Vincent dives deep into how some members of their community create space to imagine/reimagine themselves and the world—to play, to breathe, to just be.

Each work documents important figures in Vincent's life from the New York QTBIPOC community. Each image portrays a space where the figures may show themselves on their own terms. Vincent depicts worlds where figures have the freedom to exist as they please. More than a series, these images form a community in the shared space of the gallery, seeing and being seen by not just the viewer but each other.

This exhibition also plays with scale and texture. Vincent seamlessly blends traditional Chinese materials (linen, paper) with one of Western origin (acrylics, watercolor). The watercolor book also contrasts astonishing scale (88 paintings) with intimacy and play. Some of this interplay comes through in the social media thirst trap compositions, as well as in the color choices for flesh tones (more fantastical or expressive) or overall temperature.

By contrast, the five acrylic portraits on linen are almost literally larger than life and while grand, both the edges of the painted area and of the linen are left raw. Throughout is a sense of relaxed completeness, that the paintings and those they portray are already whole. They stand at home in their own skin, inherently powerful by virtue of size, existing at their leisure together.

Though their scale facilitates more scrutiny, this is partly mitigated by a specific power structure: the viewer does not simply get to look at vulnerable forms. The viewer is, in fact, surrounded by them and looked at in return. In terms of community, this enveloping, returned gaze also offers the viewer a chance to be *seen*, potentially by those who might understand them.

Depending on the viewer, the figures' gazes may read as kinship, acknowledgment, or even a challenge. The watercolor book alone is a work of resistance by centering QTBIPOC desire—and on their own terms. Vincent does not highlight the traumatic context to which the book responds (e.g. white supremacy in mainstream desire, the history of US conquest in East and Southeast Asia, the resulting sexualization of and violence against Asian women, or the reframing of Asian men as asexual or criminal). Instead, they build a world of freedom and creates a gaze that is *for* those who appear in the book itself. When placed together, all of the works transform the gallery into a community of havens—with protections built into the placement, scale, and compositions.

However, the works in it are not about confrontation. Even the architecture became something to incorporate and activate. Rather than fight the recesses and odd angles, the placement became all about intriguing interplay. The platform that holds the book echoes the columns in the room

and the length of the windows. The large painting 明 (*Portrait of Aki and Tobie*) accents the room's hollowed corner—and celebrates its wonkiness. The works are, in essence, about love. These grand gestures for/about/from the diasporic QTBIPOC community.

Vincent also engages traditional Chinese art forms in a queer, contemporary way by reinterpreting the 1000+ year old practice of The Three Perfections: painting, poetry, and calligraphy. During the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127 AD), these three art forms became an intertwined practice for self-expression, typically among scholars and officials.

In Vincent's performances, these art forms take shape among gold ink, high heels, and a whole lot of cinnabar red. Iconographies and practices from Chinese art history and contemporary queer Asian America come together as celebrations of the artist's own diasporic queer community.

C. Grace Chang, Curator

