

# Basic Detail Report

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**Title**

I Hear Their Gentle Voices Calling

**Artist**

Hung Liu

**Date**

2017

**Dimensions**

Painting: 82 × 82 × 2 in. (208.3 × 208.3 × 5.1 cm)

**Medium**

Mixed media, multi-layer resin

**Classifications**

Paintings

**Credit Line**

Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of

Edward Drummond Libbey

**Object number**

2018.26

**Exhibition History**

Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York, 2017-2018.

**Label Text**

Hung Liu grew up in China during Mao Zedong's Communist Revolution and moved to California in 1984. On a trip back to China in 1991, she became inspired by historical Chinese photographs of people displaced and marginalized. In 2015 she began a series based on Dorothea Lange's Dustbowl and Depression-era photographs of the 1930s, also featuring those displaced and marginalized. *I Hear Their Gentle Voices Calling* is part of this series, which explores struggle as well as perseverance and resilience. Liu identifies with the individuals in Lange's works through her own experiences as an immigrant who had been "caught up in wars, famines, and revolutions." Liu's paintings transform her source material, introducing motifs that are often symbolic. The magnolia and northern mockingbird (state flower and bird of Mississippi) on the left and the cotton blossom on the right suggest the man's background and point to the dark and violent histories of sharecropping and the enslavement of African Americans. The title references lyrics from Stephen C. Foster's song "Old Black Joe," purportedly written after the passing of a man who had worked as a servant in Foster's Pennsylvania home. It was often sung in minstrel shows, which featured grotesque racial stereotypes and performers in blackface. Liu addresses the racist legacies of this period, while emphasizing and amplifying the subject of her painting. The gold background recalls religious altarpieces, implying the man is a holy figure to be commemorated and celebrated.

**Not On View**