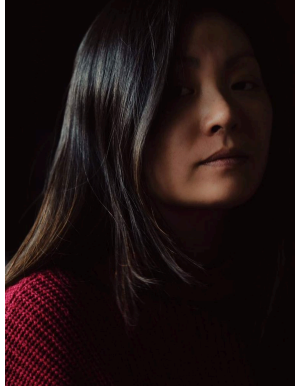


Stephanie Shih
Photographer

Artist:



Stephanie Shih is a photographer based in Los Angeles, originally from San Francisco. Specifically, she is a still-life photographer known for her use of shadow in a painterly way, applied to food from different perspectives. Shih started photographing on road trips with her dad's half-frame camera throughout her childhood. While in school, she worked as a caterer, which later translated to her job as a photographer as she demonstrated her food experience through the visual image. As a photographer, Stephanie appreciates the absence of light as much as light itself. To her, beauty exists in the shadowed depths where our imagination sees more than our eyes. Shih is a second-generation Taiwanese-Chinese American. Shih often likes to explore themes of cultural dynamics, such as belonging and celebration, through her still-life photographs. Shih still lives in Los Angeles, and when not in the studio or even in the kitchen creating things, she is a professor at the University of Southern California.

World Audience:

Her series, 'Open Flowers Bear Fruit (Asian American Still Life),' is an ongoing project that makes space for Asian American cultural experiences directly from an Asian American perspective. The project creates this connection between still life and Asian traditions. Shih often partnered with Asian American small business owners throughout the series, foregrounding their food practices that make up such a multicultural landscape. These partnerships have allowed her to present perspectives and lived experiences from the numerous cultures that feed the label that is "Asian American."

Artwork:

Shih uses her photographs to connect her experiences as an Asian American woman and the work of the still-life. She shows her experiences of her traditions and childhood through her still-lives of food and other culturally significant objects.

Midautumn Memento Mori, Shih

2020, 24x16", archival pigment print on agave paper.



"The Midautumn Festival celebrates harvest, longevity, and friends and family. This piece examines the midautumn themes through the lens of a year marked by separation, loss, and grief. And mooncakes, gifted and eaten during the festival." -Shih

Still Life with Ube, Shih

2021, 24x30", archival pigment print on agave paper.



“This work features treats from the San Francisco Bay Area. The team at Ube Area takes inspiration from all-American kids' treats like Pop Tarts and Rice Krispies and remixes them using classic Southeast Asian flavors like ube and calamansi lime.” - Shih

Spring (春), Shih

2021, 24x30", archival pigment print on agave paper.



“A celebration of the ethereal softness of spring. This work features handmade mochi from Chikara Mochi.” -Shih

Subjective frame:

What cultural aspects are being shown?

What are some cultural traditions your family has? Do any involve food?

Structural frame:

What catches your attention first?

What difference does the lighting make?

How does the arrangement of the still life create a mood?

Cultural frame:

What is the importance of cultural traditions?

How do traditions impact how we grow up?

What different cultural traditions of the world aren't your own?

Vocabulary:

Composition: The organization of the art elements and principles.

Culture: A way of life of a group of people, the beliefs, values, customs, and symbols accepted.

Perspective: The sense of depth or spatial relations to objects within an image.

Still-Life: A painting, drawing, or picture of an arrangement of objects.

Taiwanese-Chinese American: A born American who has ancestors from Taiwan and China.

Theme: An idea that recurs in a given artwork.

Ideas for Artwork and Research:

Think of an important aspect of your culture; how can you explore it and express it in an artwork?

Research your cultural traditions, where they come from, and where they started.

Photograph, draw or paint something that represents you and a cultural connection in your life or childhood.

Think about using color, lighting, and **composition** to show the idea to your audience effectively.



Artist #2

Penny De Los Santos was born in Germany to an American military family that eventually settled in a small town in Texas. Penny's background inspired her curiosity about culture. Santos had begun photographing to understand her diverse cultural background and identity. It has influenced the subject she picks and the way she makes photographs.

Compare and contrast:
Untitled, Santos



How are Shih's and Santos' works similar? How are they different?
What can you tell about each artist by their pictures? Which seems more familiar to you?
What's important about the subject/object in each artist's photographs?
What do some of the objects represent?