

Yan Wen Chang

Gillian

January 15th - February 21st 2026

“(I think I made you up inside my head.)”

— Mad Girl’s Love Song, Sylvia Plath, 1953

Gillian is Yan’s birth-name. It is the name that characterizes the beginning of her life, and the transitory, disillusioned, and difficult period of immigration to Canada at the age of seventeen. To her, this name is saturated with her initial experiences of this migration; it is the identity that remembers the alienation of assimilation, the desperations of success, and the hopelessness of becoming other.

This exhibition follows two previous iterations Gillian, at Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto, and Jillian, at Hawkins Headquarters, Atlanta, both of which were formulated by and from this exploration of the disjointed understanding of identity when examined through tensions of assimilation, cultural displacement, and self-fashioning. Drawing on Yan’s complex lexicon of symbols – the rose, the car, and the question mark – the paintings in this exhibition deviate from controlled, graphic linearity which was the primary mode of working in Yan’s previous work, and instead embody a riotous and billowing network of narratives: both autobiographical, and inflated. Throughout these works, the two characters that move in and out of the paintings each have their own tendencies. Gillian’s presence drifts through these compositions like a fading signal—her legacy dissolving into ambiguity yet insisting on recognition. Jillian’s counterpart asserts herself in defiance, provoking reflection on the multiplicity, contradiction, and resilience that define an immigrant life.

Yan positions the self as unfixed, an ever-changing entity who denies relaxing into static presence, refusing resolution as a way of marking the immigrant self as multiple, contradictory, haunted, and irrepressible.

Yan Wen Chang (b. 1993) received her MFA from the University of Guelph in 2022, and her BFA from the Ontario College of Art and Design University in 2015. She is the first woman in her family to receive both bachelor's and master's degrees.

Recent solo and two-person exhibitions include Gillian, Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto (2025); Jillian, Hawkins Headquarters, Atlanta (2025); Nympho, A.D. NYC, New York (2024); Auto Dealer Dream: Yan Wen Chang and Andrew Harding, Weatherproof, Chicago (2024); Odile's Notorious Magnum Opus Of Thirty-Two Fouettés, Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto (2023); Four Hollywood Paintings, X in Residence, Toronto (2022); and A. Dream, General Hardware, Toronto (2022). Selected group exhibitions include Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery (2025); Visual Arts Centre of Clarington (2025); and Hearth, Toronto (2024).

Both Nympho, at A.D. NYC, New York (2024); and Auto Dealer Dream at Weatherproof, Chicago (2024) earned features as 'Must See' exhibitions in Artforum. Chang's 33 ft. public billboard entitled same problem my father had and what he dreamed was on display at Hamilton Artists' Inc. from 2022 to 2023. Chang currently lives and works in Guelph, Canada, and is represented by Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto.