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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Susan Chen

Plan B

March 8 - April 20, 2024

Opening Reception: Friday, March 8, 6 - 8pm

Rachel Uffner Gallery is pleased to present *Plan B*, Susan Chen's second solo exhibition at the gallery. Notably, the show forges an impressive new artistic direction for Chen, whose multimedia presentation includes a collection of ceramics alongside her signature large-scale, impasto-heavy portraits. In addition to the opening reception Friday, March 8 from 6 - 8 pm; on Saturday, April 13, Rachel Uffner will host a talk featuring the artist in conversation with Karen Wong, the Cofounder and Chief Creative Officer of Guilty By Association.

Inherent to Chen's practice is a tangible devotion to community best exemplified by her portrait-painting process. All 39 figures in her vibrant canvases were painted live, each invited by Chen to her studio for a 3-hour afternoon session, during which she painted their likeness and listened to their stories. Some individuals Chen met at Planned Parenthood events, while others responded to her open call requests on related online forums. Chen envisions these individuals as active participants in the art-making process and as advocates for the mission and conversations her paintings hope to generate to a wider public audience.

Chen's topics of interest are varied, ranging from political to personal to professional, but all are made buoyantly clear in her vivid, almost cartoon-like compositions. In "The Paintings Are Not Going to Paint Themselves", a humorous studio scene unfolds. While Chen's assistants bustle about the workroom, carrying books, mixing paint, drawing sketches, Chen herself hides tearfully beneath a table, curled up in fetal position. Subverting the long, male tradition of solitary self-portraits of the artist-genius, Chen celebrates her own studio team in a playfully self-effacing narrative, highlighting the often-overlooked labor of assistants, art handlers, and other support staff in the industry.

In "An Assembly of Aftercare Kits", Chen depicts her friends and her volunteering at a Planned Parenthood event. Each mirrors the other in pose, left hand outstretched over a box of supplies. Together, the women stand like a garrison in protection of women's reproductive rights, packaging abortion aftercare kits one sanitary pad, stress ball, fuzzy sock, and Welch's fruit snack at a time. Similarly, "Plan B: A Discussion" addresses the aftermath of the Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* by portraying a diverse group of women gathering to discuss their personal experiences with the emergency contraceptive. The women's unapologetic poses and contemplative expressions pay homage to feminist painter Sylvia Sleigh's "A.I.R. Group Portrait" (1978), which depicts Sleigh's fellow members of the all-female cooperative A.I.R. Gallery in traditionally masculine poses.

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Chen's commitment to addressing issues of women's rights expands into her ceramic creations, a bold but not unanticipated development precipitated by the artist's longstanding interest in sculptural paint. In the gallery's front room, a larger-than-life Plan B box sits behind a bold "VOTE" sign. In a time when women's rights are coming increasingly under threat, Chen emphasizes the necessity of active participation to protect the long-fought progress for women. Similarly, the artist advocates for the elimination of the tampon luxury tax through her "Free Tampax" sculpture, encouraging viewers to interact with the ceramic artwork by taking real tampons held in the box.

A series of stylish Purell bottle reproductions complete the ceramic installation in the front room, a playful continuation of Chen's first solo exhibition at the gallery which was wholly dedicated to the once-ubiquitous symbol of the COVID-19 pandemic. Humorous yet self-reflective, Chen's fascination with the hand sanitizer manifests in abundance in "Purell Super Tower", which depicts the artist buried beneath a cascade of Purell bottles. Across mediums, Chen reintroduces an object that is highly charged yet all-too-familiar, invoking our collective memories of an anomalous time.

Spanning the entirety of the gallery's first floor, *Plan B* covers an impressive range both materially and thematically, emblematic of Chen's own vivacious energy, boundless curiosity, and commitment to social discourse.

Susan Chen (b. 1992, Hong Kong, China) is a 2022 Forbes Under 30 North America Honoree, 2022 Artsy Vanguard Artist, and 2020 Hopper Prize Winner. She received her MFA from Columbia University in 2020 and her BA Honors from Brown University in 2015. Chen presented her debut New York solo exhibition, *On Longing*, at Meredith Rosen Gallery in 2020, and her debut Los Angeles solo exhibition, *I Am Not A Virus*, at Night Gallery in 2021. Recent group exhibitions include Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, ME; Brandeis University Kniznick Gallery, Waltham, MA; Songwon Art Center, Seoul, South Korea; The Aldrich Museum, Ridgefield, CT; Moss Arts Center, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA; and Jeffrey Deitch Gallery, Los Angeles, CA. In 2022, Chen was an Artist-in-Residence at Silver Art Projects, where she participated in their Social Justice & Activism program at the World Trade Center. Chen's work can be found in the collections of the Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY; Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH; Museum of Chinese in America, New York, NY; Beth Rudin DeWoody Collection, Palm Beach, FL; Perry and Marty Granoff Center for the Creative Arts, Providence, RI; and the Yuz Museum Shanghai, Shanghai, China. The artist currently lives and works in New York City.

Image: Susan Chen, *These Paintings Are Not Going to Paint Themselves*, 2024, oil on linen, 78 x 85 in (198.1 x 215.9 cm)

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