

NIGHT GALLERY

2276 E. 16th Street, Los Angeles, California 90021

nightgallery.ca

SUSAN CHEN

Old Cape Cod

January 17 - February 13, 2026

Night Gallery is pleased to present *Old Cape Cod*, an exhibition of plein air paintings by New York based artist Susan Chen. This is the artist's second solo show with the gallery, following *I Am Not a Virus* (2021).

Old Cape Cod marks a personal expansion in Chen's practice—her broadening from community-based portraiture toward the vast, shifting possibilities of American landscape painting. The exhibition borrows its title from Patti Page's 1950s song "Old Cape Cod," a nostalgic ode to the seashore that mirrors Chen's own years of summer visits.

The paintings in *Old Cape Cod* depict sweeping coastal paths, salt marshes, dense clusters of pitch pines, hydrangeas in full bloom, and smaller, more intimate snapshots capturing snippets of Chen's daily wanderings. The works function as diary entries and field studies, both love letters from beachside summers and documentation of environmental transformation. Over a decade of visits, she has witnessed the landscape shifting—storms growing more volatile, unfamiliar species of bugs appearing, and coastlines receding. In an era of accelerating climate change, Chen approaches her landscapes with the same ethic of care she brings to her portraits, treating each place itself as a subject worthy of witness.

Working directly from observation, Chen's plein air practice exposed her to the volatility of the natural world: heat and haze, sudden winds, swarming bugs, shifting tides, and the fleeting blaze of an Atlantic sunset. Navigating sudden weather changes and chatting tourists, Chen found it refreshing to ditch her usual careful planning for gut-driven intuition. The result is a landscape that is not only serene, but also alive—quivering, restless, and saturated with color.

Chen follows a long, storied lineage of artists who regarded Cape Cod as an artistic haven. Helen Frankenthaler, Lee Krasner, Edward Hopper, and Andrew Wyeth all produced visions of the locality while helping to define American modernism. While their work often conveyed stillness, architecture, or contemplative quiet, Chen's landscapes offer a contemporary response—one of motion, exuberance, unpredictability, and sensory intensity. In her hands, the whisper of beach grass becomes a rustle, the lap of waves a whoosh, the horizon a vibrating field of light.

NIGHT GALLERY

2276 E. 16th Street, Los Angeles, California 90021

nightgallery.ca

The show's largest piece, *Sunset at the Cape* (2025), features the iconic red Nauset Lighthouse—the same lighthouse, Chen tells me, from the Cape Cod chip bags. The only human figure in the exhibition, the artist herself, sits at an outdoor easel, preparing a smaller painting of the very same landscape. That day, wild turkeys wandered into Chen's outdoor workspace, earning their way into the painting, serving now as a winking reference to the mythology of the Cape's First Encounter Beach. The skyscape is one of sunset, a "well-worn trope," Chen says, that she wished to include.

Chen's debut landscape exhibition reveals a new dimension of her practice—one rooted in attention, persistence, and the deepening intimacy that comes from returning to the same coastline year after year. *Old Cape Cod* offers a portrait of a place in motion, seen through the eyes of an artist discovering the land as both refuge and revelation.

Susan Chen (American, b. 1992, Hong Kong SAR) received her MFA from Columbia University in 2020 and a BA Honors from Brown University in 2015. She is a 2025 Creative Capital Grant Winner and was a 2022 Artist-in-Residence at Silver Art Projects. Chen's first solo exhibitions were presented with Meredith Rosen Gallery, New York, NY; Night Gallery, Los Angeles, CA; and Uffner & Liu Gallery, New York, NY. Recent group exhibitions include The Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY; The Aldrich Museum, Ridgefield, CT; Anchorage Museum, Anchorage, AK; Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, ME; Brandeis University, Waltham, MA; Songwon Art Center, Seoul, Korea; and Jeffrey Deitch Gallery, Los Angeles, CA. Her work is held in the collections of the Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH; Museum of Chinese in America, Los Angeles, CA; Yuz Museum Shanghai, Shanghai, China, among others.