

I SIT IN YOUR PASSENGER SEAT
AND YOU DRIVE JUST LIKE
MY FATHER
WHO DRIVES TO LEAVE BEHIND
THE WEIGHT OF THE PAST
WE BOTH NO LONGER
WANT TO REMEMBER.

THE MOON, FAST CARS
YOUR HEADLIGHTS WERE
STARS

YOUR GUN WAS LOADED
HUNDRED BILLS FOLDED
I LIT YOUR CIGARETTE.

I WANT TO SAY TO YOU:
TAKE ME BACK TO MY
MOM'S NIGHT.

I KNOW YOU WANT TO
I MUST ASK YOU
YOU JUST DON'T KNOW
YOU DON'T KNOW
WHERE I COME FROM
WHAT I'VE COME
I SUFFERED
I SACRIFICED
I WANT A
BETTER LIFE



I KNOW
I MUST BE CRAZY
BECAUSE
I NEVER LOSE SIGHT
I NEVER LOSE HOPE
THAT THE NEXT
DESTINATION
MIGHT WELCOME
ME HOME.
I CALLED MY MOTHER AT 4 AM
IT IS 4 P/M WHERE SHE LIVES
AND
I TOLD HER
THAT YOU DRIVE THE SAME
WAY MY FATHER DRIVES
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SHE SAID MY FATHER
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SHE SAID
HE NEVER LOST SIGHT
HE NEVER LOST HOPE
THAT THE NEXT DESTINATION
WOULD CARRY US HOME
SHE SAID SHE'S ALWAYS KNOWN

THAT I HAVE THE
SAME PROBLEM MY FATHER HAD
AND
WHAT HE
DREAMED.

same problem my father had and what he dreamed
Yan Wen Chang

This catalogue is published on the occasion of the exhibition, *same problem my father had and what he dreamed*, on view from June 30, 2022 - May 29, 2023 on Hamilton Artists Inc.'s Cannon Wall.

Yan Wen Chang (b. 1993) immigrated to Toronto, alone, from Malaysia at the age of 17. Growing up as a young woman in Kuala Lumpur under patriarchal and corrupt conditions instilled in her an overwhelming desire to escape social and political hardships in her homeland. Chang also developed a resolute determination to achieve a level of success that could not be realized at home. Chang translocated to North America in 2011 to fulfil both. All the subject matter in her paintings abstract the iconic symbols of the traditional American Dream to express her images as a materialist impulse and a sensitivity to the pure haecceity of each subject. Chang's paintings are about freedom, intuition, and courage. They are embedded in her paintings by their very existence in their making as these qualities define who she is.

Philip Leonard Ocampo (b.1995) is an artist and arts facilitator based in Tkaronto, Canada. Ocampo's multidisciplinary practice involves painting, sculpture, writing and curatorial projects. Exploring worldbuilding, radical hope and speculative futures, Ocampo's work embodies a curious cross between magic wonder and the nostalgic imaginary. Following the tangents, histories and canons of popular culture, Ocampo is interested in how unearthing cultural zeitgeists of past / current times may therefore serve as catalysts for broader conversations about lived experiences; personal, collective, diasporic, etc.

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Yan Wen Chang, *same problem my father had and what he dreamed*, 2022. Detail view.

Find me in the front passenger seat

Philip Leonard Ocampo

A car is a sophisticated arrangement of separate parts. Within its interior, a space is carved out for its passengers, folding around the body that is to sit within its frame. An average car has two seats in front, with a variable number of other seats or storage space behind it. The static body is lifted, encased in metal, wiring, and upholstery. Petrol ignites the engine, and thus its wheels move forth.

One of the most important unspoken rules in my family household is that you never leave Dad alone in the driver's seat while you sit in the back.

*Don't you know that's rude? Don't **ever** make Dad feel like a chauffeur.*

Learning from my mistakes, I now understand. My role as the companion in the front passenger seat is imperative to the drive. Respectfully taking my place by his side is exactly where I'm needed: The front passenger seat is the most underrated, valuable place in the framework of the car.

The emancipatory potential of the front passenger seat is the guiding proposition of Yan Wen Chang's *same problem my father had and what he dreamed*. Scrawled on printer paper in thick sharpie, Chang charts a stream of consciousness into a rhythm with stark immediacy, turning the figure in the driver seat into a mutable presence while spotlighting the wandering thoughts

of Chang herself, who muses from the adjacent seat.

Just like my girl, nowadays, you can always find me in the front passenger seat.

I grew up as the youngest of five rowdy children, who clamored over each other screaming *shotgun* repeatedly in the hopes of claiming the front passenger seat (if Mom wasn't coming). I'm used to being crammed into a car with four other unbearable siblings, so the leg space and window views of the front passenger seat always felt so luxurious to me.

With much less responsibility than the driver, the leisure quality of this seat is undeniable. I'm not bound by the rules of the road, my focus isn't fragmented across my body, my feet are off the pedals and my hands are off the designated steering wheel placements of 10:00 & 2:00. Through the front and side windows, and the side-view mirror that hangs off the car door, there is room for my eye to admire the landscapes that speed by. In this seat I can choose to think or to *not* think about the sting and spark of life that coexist within me. Optimism entangled with realism, I am spatially aware.

The perceptive nature that is attributed to the person in the front passenger seat can be mobilized into a functional relationship that is symbiotic to the driver. With free hands and some focus, the front passenger can become a navigator, instrumental to the car's arrival at its final destination.

The roots of the term *shotgun* stem from 1800s American stagecoach culture, where carriage drivers were often accompanied by a passenger armed with a

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literal firearm, poised to scatter pockets of silver ammunition at wild animals, bandits or other lawless people who might have their sights set on stealing the carriage¹. The gift of perception mobilizes witnessing; the passenger is privy to the entire scope of the landscape that the car must journey through.

*One finger locked on the trigger
 One hand firm on the barrel.
 No patience for bullshit.*

¹ McManus, Melanie Radzicki. "The Phrase 'Riding Shotgun' Came Way after the West Was Won." HowStuffWorks. September 4, 2020.

Riding in a car can, too, feel monotonous. While on family road trips, my siblings and I would take turns through the night sitting in the front passenger seat, reading directions, conversing and belting nostalgic oldies with Dad to keep him conscious at the wheel as he rode on. My eyes would lock on a point in the distance, then flicker back to a new point the second it passed. I did it again and again as the night persisted.

In *same problem my father had and what he dreamed*, Chang recalls a gig that required a full day of stops throughout the city. While driving through this circuit in the front passenger seat, that same expansive perspective became restrictive through the meandering repetition of riding endlessly around town. Chang's text vibrates with eagerness, constantly taming a brazen, fiery spirit into the dull confines of her lived experiences full of disadvantage and longing. Her heart breaks over and over.

How far could we have gotten if we drove into the horizon instead of making the rounds?

With the same exhaustion and unwavering hope, my tired, tearful eyes, too, survey my surroundings from the front passenger seat. I realize that my *own* father drives to leave behind the past we both no longer want to remember.

Chang and I make our returns home from trips that we were only witnesses to, getting dropped off right where our separate journeys began.

Only I feel just a little less alone now.



Yan Wen Chang, *same problem my father had and what he dreamed*, 2022. Exhibition installation view.

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Copy Editing: Sanaa Humayun
Documentation: Abedar Kamgari & Kristina Durka
Design: Sanaa Humayun
ISBN: 978-1-926454-26-9



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Hamilton Artists Inc. would like to acknowledge the generous support of its funders, donors, sponsors, and programming partners.



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For more information, exhibition documentation, and extended biographical notes on the artists, please visit theinc.ca/exhibitions/

Cover: Yan Wen Chang, *same problem my father had and what he dreamed*, 2022.

Exhibition installation view at Hamilton Artists Inc.

Page 5 & 6: Yan Wen Chang, *same problem my father had and what he dreamed*, 2022.

Page 7: Yan Wen Chang, *same problem my father had and what he dreamed*, 2022.

Exhibition installation view.