

AMERICAN
art
COLLECTOR



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WARREN CHANG

Drawn in the light



Warren Chang and John Steinbeck were raised on the Monterey Peninsula of California. Inspired by the farmworkers in the fertile fields of the Salinas Valley, Steinbeck wrote epic novels such as *East of Eden* and Chang documents their lives in paintings with open narratives.

Steinbeck wrote, "There are no ugly questions except those clothed in condescension."

Chang's paintings are not laden with social

commentary on the plight of the farmworker. They celebrate the human spirit—without condescension. "I may have a particular intent," Chang says, "but I'm not forcing that on the viewer. The viewers become artists and interpret the meaning and significance on their own. Great art seems to have more than one meaning."

His artistic antecedents include the 19th-century realists and naturalists from Millet to Bastien-Lepage, but especially American painters of working people

1
Lettuce Harvest, oil on canvas, 24 x 30"

2
Orchard in July, oil on canvas, 20 x 24"

3
Artist Warren Chang.
Photo by John Fleskes.



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such as Eastman Johnson and Thomas Hart Benton.

The workers in *Carrot Harvest at Dawn* could be farmhands from the 19th century but for their hoodies. Aluminum ladders and a tractor bring the pickers in *Orchard in July* into the 21st century. These are paintings of the hard work that brings us our food and the nameless people who have done it for generations. The nameless, too, have lives, which Chang records in *Writing Home*.

"Their struggle to make a living for their family is very universal," he says. "We're all trying to take care of our family, trying to make a living. Real struggle to make a life out of this." While he paints the specifics of farmworkers in a particular location, he strives "to create philosophically a mood that captures a more universal experience."





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“Warren has a great ability to give the people we very often don’t give attention to, the homeless and fieldworkers, a dignity that they deserve using a palette that harkens back to French artist Millet.”

— Chris Winfield, owner, Winfield Gallery



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An exhibition, *Warren Chang: Drawn In The Light*, will be shown at Winfield Gallery in Carmel-by-the-Sea, California, July 8 through 31.

Chang’s manipulation of light to create a mood is based on his masterful use of traditional painting techniques and his keen eye. He begins with a field sketch or photographs and creates a rough graphite sketch and then a color study. He begins the final canvas with a raw umber underpainting that brings a warmth to the final work.

Perhaps “warmth” best describes his paintings of farmworkers—a warmth that comes from his having watched them at work and from having heard their stories. ●

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Carrot Harvest at Dawn,
oil on canvas, 20 x 16"

5
Onion Field, oil on canvas, 20 x 34"

6
Writing Home, oil on canvas, 32 x 34"