



ARTIST

Corky Lee

TITLE

Untitled

DATE

1993

DIMENSIONS

12 in H x 18 in W

MEDIUM

Gelatin Silver Print

CATALOGUE NUMBER

1993.025

CURRENT LOCATION

1620-13B

CORKY LEE

BORN

1947

BIRTHPLACE

New York, NY

GENDER

Male

CITIZENSHIP

United States

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Chinese-American

LIGHT WORK RELATIONSHIP

Artist-in-Residence, 1993

LIGHT WORK PUBLICATIONS

Contact Sheet 80

Contact Sheet 97

ESSAYS

Corky Lee has been photographing Asian American communities and events for the past twenty years. The persistence of his efforts brings a personal point of view to his photographs that attempts to loosen the enigma and mystery associated with Asian Americans. He has photographed many events that show Asian American's fully engaged in a political process of change. Together with his portraits that include Filipino piazza makers, Chinese policemen and Korean kosher deli owners, he spins a visual record of Asians trying to find their place in America. Lee also creates photographic scenarios that construct his personal experience as an Asian American. His notations of continuum and change are revealed in a different way in photograph here. In this picture, a huge sign for a diamond store at one entrance to Chinatown provided him with the perfect backdrop to place a Chinese woman costumed and posing as the Statue of Liberty. A street sign locates the scene on the Bowery, "the street of homeless men," and provides another layer of irony within the humor of the image. The diverse locations that appear in his photographs let us know that he is never very far from his camera. Like a reporter with a single client and determined sense of purpose, Lee offers us a point of view about the life and times of Asian American that is compacted with familiarity and tempered with knowledge. Corky Lee lives in New York City and participated in Light Work's Artist-in-Residence Program in August 1993. In the last paragraph of a recent book by Gwen Kinkead, titled *Chinatown-A Portrait of a Closed Society*, she describes her chance meeting with an elderly man in a tenement building in Chinatown in New York City. Entering a narrow courtyard that looks like it has been untouched since the 1880s she ascends a set of stairs. At the top of the stairs she knocks on a door that displays a sign written in Chinese granting blessings on everyone who enters. Her knock is answered by an old Chinese man who later informs her that he has lived in Chinatown for sixty years, and has never before spoken to a white person. The scene is an exclamation to the thesis that Kinkead bears out in this well-written, research and distributed book, describing Chinatown as a closed society. The photograph by Corky Lee of a group of Chinese women in New York waving American flags and protesting for economic justice, dramatically opposes Kinkead's thesis and demonstrates the crucial role that point of view plays in our understanding and grasp of cultural identity. Lee has been photographing Asian American communities and events for the past twenty years. The persistence of his efforts brings a personal point of view to his photographs that attempts to loosen the enigma and mystery associated with Asian Americans. He has photographed many events that show Asian American's fully engaged in a political process of change. Together with his portraits that include Filipino piazza makers, Chinese policemen and Korean kosher deli owners, he spins a visual record of Asians trying to find their place in America. Lee also creates photographic scenarios that construct his personal experience as an Asian American. The diverse locations that appear in his photographs let us know that he is never very far from his camera. Like a reporter with a single client and determined sense of purpose, Lee offers us a point of view about the life and times of Asian American that is compacted with familiarity and tempered with knowledge. Corky Lee lives in New York City and participated in Light Work's Artist-in-Residence Program in August 1993.