Asian Arts Initiative Presents Fall Exhibition:
Working Conditions

Philadelphia, PA, September 4-December 15- What does labor mean to Asian American communities? Who are the workers in our communities? What is the value of our work? Where does our labor go unnoticed? How do we remake our relationship to labor to align with our value systems?

Asian American lives are shaped by the concept of labor, whether it’s working in factories overseas, working as caretakers in the United States, or performing the emotional labor of smiling every time someone asks “Where are you from?”. The unsung labor of Asian Americans is foundational to the United States, along with the labor of enslaved African Americans, incarcerated inmates, undocumented workers, femmes, and others.

The artists in Working Conditions utilize a variety of strategies—performance, video, painting, installation, sculpture, and mixed media—to illuminate the ways in which labor operates on a global and a personal level. Their work tells the untold story of Asian Americans in the labor movement, as well as the labor of creating a diasporic community. Their work asks us to consider connections between the work of the artist and the condition of workers within a global economy.

Taken together, their work reaffirms the genesis of Asian American communities as a laboring class alongside other forms of racialized labor, and proposes a reorganized view of the world that recognizes artists as workers, and workers as artists.
Working Conditions is accompanied by a series of public programs that examine the topic of labor through poetry, workshops, and musical performance.

The exhibition will be on display in Asian Arts Initiative’s Main Gallery from September 4–December 15.

15. Opening reception will be Friday, September 7, 6:00–8:00 PM

About Asian Arts Initiative: Asian Arts Initiative is a multi-disciplinary and community-based arts center in Philadelphia that engages advances racial equity and understanding, activating artists, youth, and their communities through creative practice and dialogue grounded in the diverse Asian American experience. Through exhibitions, performances, and community projects, we provide an inclusive gathering place for conversation and exchange of ideas. Our community-based arts initiatives seek out and cultivate innovative models for artists to engage with local communities, with a particular emphasis on working in partnership with our immediate neighborhood. Our primary programs include: 1) Artist residencies, commissions, and presenting of performances and exhibitions for artists to develop professionally and to create socially relevant artwork reflecting community experiences; 2) Year-round out-of-school-time programming for middle school youth, offering creative development and a safe place; 3) Participatory curatorial practices and various community development initiatives in our immediate neighborhood of Chinatown North/Callowhill.