

sweet green
Alexander Si



sg_Plaque
2022
Steel, wood, paint
25 x 21 inches



sg_Seating Area
2022
Steel, wood, plants, chair, videos (each 45:00 on loop)
63.5 x 232 inches



sg_Core Values
2022
Pyrography on wood
23.5 x 18 inches



sg_Pick Me Up
2022
Steel, wood, PFAS-free compostable bowls, receipts
80 x 48 inches

sg_Cheers
2022
Performance documentation
duration 20:00

CHINATOWN SOUP
16B ORCHARD ST.
NEW YORK, NY, 10002



INQUIRIES:
ALEX@24EBROADWAY.COM
GALLERY HOURS:
TUESDAY - SUNDAY, 12 - 7 PM

sweet green

Alexander Si

Chinatown Soup is delighted to present *sweet green*, a series of interventions by Alexander Si. On view between July 12 - July 24, 2022, with an opening performance at July 14, 7pm, *sweet green* includes simulations of the stylish decor and branding of a fast-casual salad chain. Si's total installation includes *sg_Seating Area*—the signature wide dark-wood seating area complete with plant life, *sg_Pick Me Up*—the steel and wood takeout pick up area, *sg_Plaque*—the outdoor logo with seating and coasters, and *sg_Core Values*—the company's laser cut "core values" text on a varnished pine plaque. In addition to these components, *sg_Cheers*, a 20-minute performance, is also inaugurated at the opening reception. This project was supported, in part, by a Foundation for Contemporary Arts Emergency Grant.

The sculptural replicas display the fixed elements of the business's stagecraft that stand in for the more ephemeral portions of the exchange. *sg_Seating Area* and *sg_Plaque* are the modern backdrops that help a person feel cool and trendy in the restaurant, which masks the capitalism's push to live briefly and work endlessly. Egged on by the chic setting, patrons efficiently eat with one hand, while busily reading the latest email from work or absorbing more media. This optimization of one's time is made possible through the digital processing of one's food. Being immersed in the wellness branding, one can believe that they are fulfilling their bodies and their spirits by eating salads. Each component deploys a different subliminal messaging for its audiences, Si counters and foregrounds the communication to invite new readings of text and signage: are the values expressed by the company for the betterment of humanity or their IPO?

sweet green not only replicates the environment, but also subtly examines the people inhabiting the space. The project questions the "who" on all levels of the operation and how each is affected. In *sg_Seating Area*, there's footage of the blur of clientele in yoga tights and smart suits swimming through the maximized flow of the salad bar, like wild salmon retreading their familiar path without realizing they are leaping toward their end. In the same clips, the almost-invisible limbs of the staff work quickly to serve the endless stream. To maintain the energy sustain the high spirits for the otherwise repetitious day, *sg_Cheers* demonstrates pretense and ultimately the drain upon the workforce of color. What is absent are the anonymous upper management and marketers masterminding the puppetry. Like the boiling water for lobsters, their erosion is not felt until it is entirely too late.

It is not just this one salad franchise that employs these tactics. The capitalist world is full of these incentivized relationships, a constant race toward speed and perfection. Like bees dancing for pollen or ants carrying grain, the commodification of wellness hooks people into the chase for happiness and tethers them to mindless repetition, as sold as mindfulness. When they fail to meet the expected greatness, capitalism is not an entity that can be blamed. So the fault lies with the self and the cycle begins again to improve. Can you see the pattern?

- Sophia Ma

Alexander Si is a multidisciplinary artist based in New York. He holds two BAs respectively in architecture and media studies at University of Toronto, and an MFA from SVA. His works have been shown at Home Gallery, Ki Smith Gallery, Untitled Art Fair, Tutu Gallery, Visual Aids, SPACES, and more, and have been reviewed by publications like the Brooklyn Rail, Art in America, and BOMB.

Si's work maps out how media and technology have warped our minds and bodies. Each body of work starts with an instance in American mainstream culture that stood out to him, an Asian American immigrant. The curiosity and fascination came from a place of not feeling like he belongs or understands why things are the way they are. Using techniques like hacking, construction, visual effects, staging, and acting, Si recreates the scenario with his own hands to comprehend and digest American culture. He embeds his labor into these seemingly readymade platforms and systems, as a way of reenacting the invisible labor of the immigrants in this country.

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