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What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries in February

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This week in Newly Reviewed, Travis Diehl covers John Knight's institutional critiques in Chelsea, Peggy Chiang's installation in the Lower East Side and Robert Roest's divine visions in Chinatown.

LOWER EAST SIDE

Peggy Chiang

Through Feb. 24. Laurel Gitlen, 465 Grand Street, Suite 4C, Manhattan; 212-837-2854, laurelgitlen.com.



Peggy Chiang's show "Wasted" consists of a single installation titled "Toss in the asphalt," devoted to a doting sculpture of the back of a New York City trash truck. Chiang fashioned the rearmost three feet of the vehicle from welded steel, paint, auto lights and reflective tape, based on photos, not specs.

The result, which rests on the ground, without wheels, is not a replica so much as a homage. The evident care put into this model — its aura of rust and scrapes, the arcs seemingly worn in the paint by the compactor's action — invites reverence.

Clumps of brown leaves gather around the gallery's heaters and corners, a bit meekly; there are no pigeon parts, no putrid fluids, the leaves don't even rustle. The only motion is the twist of smoke rising from what looks like a lit cigarette, standing on its butt on a chunk of pavement, but it is actually a cigarette paper packed with incense.

Yes, it's peaceful here. Mellow, meditative. An unlooked-for chance to appreciate the cycle of waste and consumption, death and life, the harmonious churn of the megalopolis. The low, distended drone rumbling from speakers tucked inside the sculpture is made from a recording of the classical music that Taiwanese garbage trucks play on their routes. The vaporous tones mix with the HVAC unit whining on a nearby roof. The general tussle of the city outside presses in on this shrine, where it is honored.