ALAN CHONG LAU

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Alan Chong Lau (born in 1948) is an American poet and visual artist. Lau began his poetic career in the wake of the 1970s Asian American movement, a surge of racial political consciousness inspired by the Civil Rights and anti-war protest movements. His first book, published with friends Garrett Kaoru Hongo and Lawson Fusao Inada, was entitled *The Buddha Bandits Down Highway 99* (1978), after the name they had given to themselves for a 1977 performance in Long Beach and as well the highway that connected their childhood homes in different parts of California. The book is a series of peripatetic romps in a Beat style refashioned for an Asian American context. In comparison, *Songs of Jadina* (1980), Lau’s first monograph and the winner of an American Book Award in 1981, is a much more contemplative, nuanced exploration of Chinese American history and the poet’s ancestry. Around the time *Songs* appeared Lau was laid off from his factory job and took a job as a greengrocer in Seattle’s International District, the city’s Asian American neighborhood; he kept that job for the next three decades. In 2000, he published his second monograph, *Blues and Greens: a produce worker’s journal*, which is a poetic record of his experiences in Seattle. His most recent book of poems, *no hurry* (2007) is a reflection about his travels to Japan. Beginning in the late 1970s, Lau also became an active painter, developing a unique style that blended elements of Chinese calligraphy and the Northwest School. A retrospective of his work was shown at the Francine Seders Gallery in Seattle in 2012.

Key Critical Works:

Desoto, Hisaye Yamamoto. Rev. of *Songs for Jadina*. *MELUS* 10.4 (1983): 78-83.

Dempster, Brian Komei. “Alan Chong Lau.” In *Asian American Poets: A Bio-Biographical Critical Sourcebook*, edited by Guiyou Huang. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002.

Kaneko, Lonny. “A Journey into Place, Race, and Spirit.” *Amerasia Journal* 6.2 (1979): 91-95.