

武晨 Wu Chen

精选文章 Selected Articles

武晨：狡兔三窟

文/陈立

武晨画过三幅兔子。

第一幅叫《怪兔子了解绘画之后》。2014年，武晨还在成都，他说“我把自己比喻成博伊斯怀中的死兔子，珍珠、金色十字架吊牌都是一个幻象。毫不掩饰地讲，我希望我这只怪兔子能在北京找到自己的机会，能有自己的一片天地。”

第二幅叫《无题（一张有兔子的静物画）》。2015年他已经搬到北京，刚刚完成了首个个展。兔子还是博伊斯那个兔子，他说他想讨论“关于资本、绘画和艺术家的关系。”

第三幅叫《夏天到了就别再写生秋天》，完成于新冠疫情爆发的2020年。兔子已经不是博伊斯的那只兔子，但可爱的白兔扒开了肚子，黑色调色盘上的色彩斑斓和画面里一抹血色令人毛骨悚然。这是一个黑暗的童话。

第一幅的兔子代表着艺术史，第二幅的兔子代表着被资本束缚的艺术创造，第三幅的兔子代表着纯真。直截了当。但我们也许会问“然后呢？”武晨没有给出答案。他的表达留在的画面和笔触里：第一幅，你会看到古典绘画或是宗教画的构图、光影与技巧，那是已成标本的兔子；第二幅，颜料轻透，颜色鲜亮，兔子还活着，像人一样在倒立；第三幅，形的勾勒与色的挥洒，童趣但又令人不寒而栗。

观看武晨的绘画，总是令人矛盾。仅从画面的视觉观感上来说，你会由衷地喜欢它的生动与幽默，但也可能觉得这些大胆的色彩和笔触有欠考虑，显得轻浮。除却个人审美上的喜恶，还因为所有的挪用和组合虽然有趣，但不深刻，以至于我们会怀疑他的动机、表达和技术。但是武晨始终把自己隐藏在画面的最深处。

武晨的绘画创作设置了多重的叙述，它们都是以最典型的象征来传递信息：艺术史的逸闻、经典绘画的图示、知名艺术家和名人的肖像、艺术家的绘画工具、卡通形象、大众文化的图例、新闻事件……我们又应该如何去看这些故事和如此多的诉说？如果只停留在画面中的信息，那么我们就会被他主动暴露的线索所欺骗。“草地上的早餐”、“椰子树”、“大浴女”关于艺术史，但更是关于我们普遍的视觉经验。我们在日常生活中接收和熟识这些经典图像，这些范

式不断在文化经验中被再造，继而成为了新的经典。武晨对于绘画制式和崇高的质疑，是基于作为一个画家所接受的训练和怀疑。更重要的是，他将经典转化为了一种大众化的平视，是对受困于权威和自我麻痹的自嘲。

这类嘲弄在武晨关于童话、卡通题材的创作里更为明显：白雪公主成为了被审视的少妇；圣诞老人镜中是一个性向不明、身材臃肿的身体；米奇被游戏所肢解成为恶的化身……我们对这些隐喻并不陌生，成人世界里时刻都充斥着此类欲望与荒诞。当武晨揭开了这层遮羞布时，我们已经无法去单纯地欣赏画面和主题。最直接的讽刺，也最无法让人直视。

相比之前的创作，武晨2020年的作品更为倾向于卡通和拟人化：政治领导人渗透进海绵宝宝的斑驳里；取材于范宽《溪山行旅图》和弗里达《Viva La Vida》的西瓜被啃食，轻蔑地向上升腾；绘画工具们在工作室里活了起来，仿佛《玩具总动员》中的玩具在吃最后的晚餐。乍一看画面鲜艳刺激、充满活力，同时也非常喧闹、不和谐。武晨依然选择了清晰地题材设置，但非理性的情绪宣泄充斥着画面，这也是武晨在2020年疫情爆发这一特殊时期最为真实表达。它们传递出的情绪失控与精神压迫，已经超越了画面的故事叙述。

武晨的绘画必然是受到争议的，因为画面里的故事似乎都是“我们已经知道的事”。如果我们遵照武晨所设置的故事线索，就失去了通向内部的可能。所有的故事、线索、形象都具有明确的指向，是他为我们提供的多个入口。但在武晨这里，它们就是二手的信息，他接收，并进行再次加工。武晨对二手信息的处理并不是求证或讨论，而是以象征去混淆，所以每一个入口都是“此路不通”。武晨绘画中的信息所依托的是通识，不是知识，这是对观者既定认知的挑衅。但是，这种熟悉恰恰将观看的评判自主权交给了观众。显而易见的象征使解读绘画更为多义和开放。同时，艺术家本人的意图却埋藏在了画作的最深处，信息的可读并不足以让我们真的能走进武晨的内心世界。可以说，他用绘画讲述故事，但也不期待被理解。这是一种矛盾但又注定的选择。我们无法通过武晨的绘画去寻找确切的答案。这就像我们跟朋友分享一件重要的事，这一过程中某些信息会消散、某些信息会汇入，事情本身已经变得不再重要。这也恰恰是我们在日常生活中，不断在谦逊与自负、怀疑与逃避之间徘徊的真实处境。

Wu Chen: A Sly Rabbit's Three Burrows

By Leo Li Chen

Wu Chen has painted three works of rabbits.

The first one was painted in 2014 when Wu Chen was still in Chengdu. He said, I used the dead rabbit in Joseph Beuys' hands as a self-analogy, where the pearls and golden cross were all imaginary. Truthfully, I hope this odd rabbit would discover opportunities in Beijing and become successful.

The second was painted in 2015. By then, the artist had moved to Beijing who recently held his first solo exhibition. The rabbit was still a Beuys' appropriation, and the artist hoped to discuss the relationships between capital, painting and the artist.

The third was completed during the 2020 Covid-19 outbreak. The rabbit is no longer that of Beuys', but a lovely white rabbit rips open its stomach to reveal an array of on a black palette, overshadowed by a terrifying dash of blood on the canvas. This painting unfolds a dark fairy tale.

The first rabbit painting embodies a nod to art history, and the second represents artistic practice under the constraints of capitalism, and

the last, a type of naivete. They are straightforward. Although, we might ask rhetorically, What then? Wu Chen hasn't offered any answers. He reserved the ideas on canvas and in his brushwork: in the first work, one perceives the composition, chiaroscuro, and techniques in classical and religious paintings, which makes the rabbit a specimen; the second painting uses light and transparent paint in bright, on which the rabbit is still alive, hung upside down; while the last one is a rendition of willful composition, its infantile affinity offers a chilling impression.

One is often left with a conflicting sense when looking at Wu Chen's works on canvas. The visual perceptions of the canvas often appeal to your genuine appreciation for their vivacity, while you may also consider these bold and brushstrokes are impulsive and frivolous. Other than your personal preference and inclinations, often the artist's appropriation and integration of pictorial elements may seem superficial, to the extent that the viewer would question his impetus, expression, and techniques. Nevertheless, Wu Chen tends to embed himself at the depth of his tableaux.

Wu Chen sets multiple narratives in his painting practice that adopts the most typical and powerful symbolism in conveying the artist's messages. They include the stories in the histories of art, the motifs from classical painting, famous artists and persons' portraits, artists' painting tools, cartoon characters, images circulating in mass culture, and news reports. How should we look at these stories and various ways of storytelling? Were we to cease with the information provided in these images, we would be deceptive of the voluntary clues Wu Chen has left us. *Petit Dejeuner Sur L'herbs*, *Palm Trees*, *Bathers* are pertinent to art history, at the same time, making references to our general visual experiences. We have been receiving and familiarizing these classic images, whose paradigms continue to renew and reinvent in becoming new classics. Wu Chen bases his standard and eminence of painting on his artistic training and an innate inclination of doubts. More importantly, he translates the classics onto a view for the masses, a kind of self-deprecation from being trapped by authority and self-paralysis.

This kind of deprecation is more apparent in Wu Chen's fairy tale, and cartoon subject matters:

Snow White becoming the young lady of scrutiny; Santa Claus, a gender-ambiguous, fat and naked man; Mickey dismembered into embodiments of evil, etc., none of which are unfamiliar to us, symbolic of desire and absurdity, prevalent in the adult world. Once Wu Chen lifts the cover-up, we would no longer appreciate his tableau and subject matter with the same innocence. His straightforward irony becomes the most unbearable sight.

Compare to his previous works, Wu Chen's artworks from 2020 incline to cartoons and personification: among them, characteristics of political figures permeate into the spots of Sponge Bob; Fan Kuan's compositional structure superimposes on a few pieces of watermelons in Frida Kahlo's *Viva La Vida*, transpiring with contempt; the artist's painting tools come to life in his art studio as if they've become the toys in *Toy Story*, having their last supper. Upon first glance, the garish and stimulating imagery exudes high energy. At the same time, the work also gives a sense of noise and dissonance. Nevertheless, Wu Chen has chosen an apparent subject matter, yet his irrational emotional catharsis fills the canvas, which is likely the most truthful expression in this unique time of the global pandemic. The emotional outburst and frustration conveyed overpowers the stories told in these imageries.

Wu Chen's paintings inevitably stir controversy because their stories are those we have already known. Were we to follow the narrative clues Wu Chen had set up for the viewers, we'd lose the possibility to reach their core. All of the stories, hints, icons embody specific references, which provide us with multiple entry points. For Wu Chen, they are second-hand information he receives and processes. The artist does not seek to verify or discuss this second-hand information, but to blend their symbolism, so every entry looks like a no entry. To decipher the messages in Wu Chen's painting would require common sense rather than knowledge, which undermines the viewer's existing cognition. However, this kind of familiarity relays the autonomy of criticism back to the viewer. The apparent symbolism allows for diverse and open-ended interpretations of the paintings. Simultaneously, the artist's intentions are buried deep within his tableaus, and the decipherable information does not suffice for entering Wu Chens' inner world. In other words, he tells stories through painting without expecting other's understanding. The artist makes a contradictory yet predilect choice. We can't discover definitive answers through Wu Chen's images. It's similar to sharing something with our friends; some information gets lost while others emerge in the course of exchange, in the end, the matter becomes less important. This decision also reflects our truthful condition of

constantly wavering between humility and conceit, doubt and avoidance in our everyday life.

武晨：孤独的命名人

文 | 杨紫

我们大可以说别人的孤独从没存在过，因为取证它太难。比如说，我去一位画家的工作室，他说他最近一个人画画，不出门，很孤独。我就会立刻发现，此刻的他称不上孤独，因为有我陪伴着他。当我窥探完他私人的隐秘空间，离开，他的世界向我关闭了。我揣测，他一个人呆着，可能也不孤独。尤其像武晨，画那么多卡通人物，更惹人怀疑。访客一走，说不定那些画中的人物，就会像《玩具总动员》里的玩具，活动手脚，围绕着他，“粉墨登场”，莺歌燕舞，受他调遣，讨他欢心。他的化装舞会开始了。他戴着王冠，是舞会的王。这又有什么可称得上孤独的呢？

怀着狐疑，我在微笑——他邀请我做他这次展览的策展人，此刻我正坐在他工作室的破沙发上。刚刚，他眼睛朝向天花板，手摆来摆去，热烈地、兴奋地、语无伦次地提议着这次展览的题目。“对！展览就叫‘所以，孤独的上帝就只能当上帝的孤儿’。是不是很酷？就这样定了！就这样定了！”

展览的画基本都是 2020 年完成的。最大的一张也是最早开始的一张，和展览同名。宽五米，高两米四，由十五张小画框拼成。画面太大，画室太小，起好大稿，他得把小画框平放在凳子或地面上，弯腰一张张画。一块椭圆调色盘镇住画面下方，盘边一圈绘画工具——油画板刷、马克笔、刮刀、铅笔、颜料——都长了手脚，长了鼻子眼，成了精。它们排列的样子像《最后的晚餐》。板刷坐在桌前正中，像耶稣。当约翰给耶稣施洗时，“从天上有声音说：‘这是我的爱子，我所喜悦的。’”¹《最后的晚餐》的餐桌上，这位没见过父亲的上帝之子，在一群惊魂失措、交头接耳的信徒间，表情安然，准备独自接受命运。

由于武晨拆开了弯腰画，《所以，孤独的上帝就只能当上帝的孤儿》看起来没个焦点，像是“满幅绘画”。鲜艳的色彩积累覆盖下，影子和明暗在他的画面中也被抹去了。绘画过程的一大部分是平置地完成的，他常常滴洒颜料到画面上，或者直接挤到画面上，而不仅仅是皴涂或描绘。是颜料的粘稠度，笔刷的尺寸，画家身体运动的急缓、偏向和节奏，形成了动态的和层次上的平衡，以及一种——说来挺不可思议的——神经质的欢快。工作方法上，他让人想起上世纪 50 年代的波洛克，以及同

属那个时代的美国表现主义画家德库宁。身体带动他们，欲望驱使他们，情感鞭策他们，让他们借着无意识，激进地寻找绘画的活力。这是一场持久而艰苦的行动。武晨画里的享受与满足，又好像在否定着持久和艰苦。

然而，引用达芬奇这般经典（经典得甚至有些无趣）的图像，又是武晨对治画面结构放任的法宝。除了《最后的晚餐》，《（无题）西山行旅图》也归属此列：一天，武晨凑巧在一张唱片封面上看到了弗里达生前的最后一幅画。它叫《生命万岁！》。画面中满是紧凑堆叠的西瓜瓣。他来了灵感，将切开的西瓜舒展地摊开，走势接近范宽的《溪山行旅图》。西瓜大红大绿，露出的籽黑白相间，挤眉弄眼。本来，弗里达的静物受墨西哥“还原画”（ex-voto）传统影响，稚拙中是热烈的虔诚，是重得不能再重的。当它“模仿”起幽深、含蓄的山水画典范时，漂浮了起来。这转换生硬，有种梦幻质地的幽默和虚无。

展览名字定下过后一段，我们又谈话。他说他开始读叔本华，反复念叨“人的一生，要么孤独，要么庸俗。”我笑出声。他大声说：“我很严肃的！”我又道歉。为了证实他的严肃，我开始讲权力意志。尼采认为意志是一切的本源。在哲学史上，这样的看法可以追溯到亚里士多德那里。亚里士多德觉得，实践的根源就是意志、欲求和生命力冲动。马克思高举“劳动”的概念，也是与生物学上的物种繁衍需求相对应的物质生活生产。总之，要实践，要创造，总是和生命自发的冲动有关。我又说，叔本华那里，大多数人唯恐直面生命意志，是因为它会灼人，不让人苟且，却能让人痛苦。真实面对自己的意志和天性的人，当然不合群。

尼采改编过伊甸园禁果的故事，说是上帝本人在周末化身成蛇，引诱亚当和夏娃偷食苹果，害他们被驱逐出完美的天堂。这样改编，为了说明基督教道德发展到一定阶段，会让人自我麻木而走向虚假，孤苦无告，茫然无措。人们患上“宗教官能症”，盲目笃信自己是罪人，而后皈依宗教，仿佛只要用宗教压抑生命的意志，就能洗涤罪恶、就能变成圣徒上天堂。要矫正这种局面，邪恶要出场，怨毒要出场，生命的欲求和冲动要出场。80 年代，武晨出生的年代，中国人在自己的上下文里读尼采，治

疗的不是基督教道德的匮乏，而是历史积弊遗传的麻木。今天，麻木不仁变了样，像卡通人物，萌得一塌糊涂，提供慰藉和娱乐，很难遭人警惕。可爱的好人太多了，坏人要出场。武晨说，坏人也能上天堂。²

武晨画里的故事太长，太曲折。他画画，话里有话：新闻里播的，道听途说的，亲眼所见的，引用典故的，搅成一团，到底情节走向何方，很难猜。他画了一张匹诺曹，取名字叫《“Sorry”匹诺曹先生说》。画里，满脸尴尬相的匹诺曹腰间长出了另一个自己，仿佛连体儿。那个半路生出的匹诺曹，头向一侧伸探，是在鞠躬道歉——他的鼻子变长了，和另外四条僵硬的胳膊杂混在一起。不知进退的匹诺曹是2020的代名词。³他弯下腰，道歉语却是不由衷的谎话——他自己也搞不清楚，结一颗恶果，到底是因为谁做错了，为什么错了，怎么就做错了。

国内疫情闹得凶的时候，人们被迫体会画家的孤独，世界诡谲荒诞的动静却渗进武晨的画室里。武晨说，这次展的画都跟2020年有关。不过他挺明白，他不是时政专家，凭自己的那一套高谈阔论时政，会接近诡辩，无益于真实。不能像匹诺曹那样骗自己。灾难近了，得想别的办法。灾难近了，新的、旧的、疯狂的、麻木的。2月中旬，武晨从郑州回到北京。隔离在画室里，徒留一股冲劲。他拿起画笔。画深处一片欢腾。他还是他舞会的王。⁴

1 《马太福音》第三章第十七节。

2 武晨上一次个展展览名为“坏人也能上天堂”。

3 2020年3月2日美国福克斯新闻台的主持人杰西·沃特斯公开要求中国人为新冠肺炎疫情正式道歉。此事造成持续的舆论和讨论，启发了武晨创作这张绘画。《“Sorry”匹诺曹先生说》是武晨第二次绘画匹诺曹的形象。第一幅为《无题（每一年都是从冬天开始）》。这两幅绘画创作均在国内疫情严重阶段内完成。

4 武晨收集了中国多位古代皇帝和现代政治领袖亲笔书写的毛笔字，拼凑成“所以，孤独的上帝就只能当上帝的孤儿”。他将这些字样绘制成一组作品。展览海报使用的字样来自于该组作品。

Wu Chen: Naming Loneliness

By Yang Zi

We can easily claim that someone else's loneliness never existed because it's too difficult to provide concrete evidence. For example, I go to a painter's studio, and he says he's been painting alone, and he feels lonely for not having gone out. I would immediately see that he is not at the moment because I am there with him. When I finish exploring his private, isolated space and leave, his world would close to me. I speculate that he is probably not lonely when he is by himself. It's especially doubtful for someone like Wu Chen, who draws so many cartoon characters. As soon as the visitors leave, the characters on his paintings like the toys in Toy Story would 'mount the stage in full regalia,' moving their arms and legs, singing and dancing, being at his service, and making him happy. His masquerade begins. He wears a crown and becomes the king of the ball. How can this be called loneliness?

I smile with suspicion - he invites me to be the curator for this exhibition, and right then, I was sitting on the broken couch in his studio. Just then, his eyes looked at the ceiling, his hands gesticulated with enthusiasm and excitement, incoherently he made a suggestion for the title of this exhibition, 'Right! The exhibition should be called "Therefore, a lonely God can only be the orphan of God." Wouldn't that cool? That's it! It's settled!'

Most of the paintings in the exhibition are completed in 2020. The largest one, also the earliest one, shares the same name as the exhibition. It measures 5 meters wide and 2.4 meters tall, consisting of fifteen small frames. Due to the large dimension of the painting and the limited studio space, once Wu Chen made the sketch up, he had to put the small frames flat on a stool or the floor and bend down to paint them one by one. An oval palette holds down the bottom of the picture, and a circle of painting tools along the rim - wide paintbrushes, markers,

scrapers, pencils, paint tubes - have grown arms and legs, noses, and eyes, and become fairies. They are arranged like The Last Supper. The broad brush sits at the centre of the table, like Jesus Christ. When John baptized Jesus, 'A voice out of the heavens said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."' ¹ At the table of The Last Supper, the son of God, who has never met his father, looks serene and ready to accept his fate alone amidst a crowd of frightened, cross-eyed whispering believers.

Since Wu Chen separated the painting and completed the work bending his back, Therefore, the Lonely God Can Only be the Orphan of God seems to lack focus and covers the 'All-over painting.' With the accumulated layers of vivid paint, shadows and chiaroscuro have been eliminated from his images. A large part of the process is done by laying the canvas flat, often dripping paint onto the surface or squeezing it directly onto the canvas, rather than merely chafing or drawing. It's the viscosity of the paint, the size of the brush, the urgency, tendency, and rhythm of the painter's bodily movements that generate the dynamics and layered balance. Moreover, to say the least, a neurotic glee. In terms of work method, Wu Chen's works remind one of Jackson Pollock and the 1950s and the American Expressionist painter Willem de Kooning. The body drove them, desires drove them, their emotions spur them on, lending their unconscious, radically sought for the vitality of painting. It was a lasting and arduous action. The enjoyment and nightmarish feet in Wu Chen's paintings seem to reject persistence and hardship.

However, appropriating classic (to the point of boredom) images such as those of Leonardo da Vinci is Wu Chen's way of tackling the image's unruly structure. In addition to The Last Supper, Untitled (Travelers Among Watermelon Hills) also belongs to this category: one day, Wu Chen

happened to see Frida Khalo's last painting on the cover of a record. It was called 'Viva la Vida' depicting tightly stacked watermelon peels. Drawing inspiration from this imagery, Wu Chen spreads out the watermelon in a sprawling manner, in the same composition of Fan Kuan's *Travelers Among Mountains and Streams*. The watermelon is rendered in garish red and green, exposing its intermittent seeds in black and white that flirt with each other. Originally, Frida's still-life was influenced by the Mexican tradition of 'ex-voto' painting, which is ardent piety in its naiveté and insurmountable heftiness. When it 'imitates' the paradigm of deep, subtle landscape painting, the imagery floats. This translation may seem stiff, with a dreamy quality of humour and nihilism.

Once the exhibition title was decided, we talked again. Wu Chen said he started reading Schopenhauer and repeated, 'A man can be himself so long as he is alone.' I laughed out loud. He said out loud, "I'm serious!" I apologized again. To confirm his seriousness, I talked about the will to power. Nietzsche believed that the will is the origin of all things. In the history of philosophy, such a view can be traced back to Aristotle. Aristotle thought that the source of practice is the will, the desire, and the vital impulse. Marx held up the notion of 'labour' as the biological counterpart to the necessity of reproduction of the species and material life production. In short, to practice or to create always relates to the spontaneous impulses of life. I add, for Schopenhauer, most people are afraid of facing the will to live because it burns, it doesn't let them settle for less, but it can make them suffer. People who are true to their own will and nature certainly don't fit in.

Nietzsche adapted the story of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. According to whom, God transformed into a snake on the weekend and tempted Adam and Eve to steal the apple, which caused the expulsion from a perfect paradise. This adaptation is meant to show that Christian morality can reach a point where people become numb to themselves and deceitful, lonely, and bewildered. People suffer from 'religious functionalism,' blindly convinced of their sins, then devoted to believing in a religion. It is as if by suppressing the will to live with faith, they can be cleansed of their sins and be saved in heaven. To rectify this situation, evil has to come out, resentment has to come out, and the desire and impulse for life have to come out. In the 1980s, when Wu Chen was born, the Chinese read Nietzsche in their context, treating not the lack of Christian morality, but the numbness from the accumulation of heredity throughout history. Today, the numbness has transformed, like the adorable cartoon characters that provide solace and entertainment, is hardly wary. There are too many cute good guys, and the bad guys need to show up. Wu Chen says, 'Bad man can also end up in heaven.'²

The stories in Wu Chen's paintings are too extensive and twisted. He paints pictures, embedded with subtexts: mixing what's on the news, hearsay, what he's seen, what he quotes. As to where the plot takes us, it would be difficult to determine. He drew a picture of Pinocchio, called 'Sorry,' Mr. Pinocchio says. In this painting, an identical Pinocchio is growing from the waist of another embarrassed one, as if it were a Siamese twin. The half-born Pinocchio, with his head sticking out to the side, is bowing in apology

- his nose has grown longer, mingling with four stiff arms. Pinocchio faced with the dilemma is synonymous with 2020.³ He bends over, but the apology is a white lie - he can't figure out for himself who did wrong and why, and how to bear bad fruit.

When the epidemic was raging in China, people were forced to experience the painter's solitude. The treacherous and absurd movements of the world seeped into Wu Chen's studio. According to Wu Chen, all of the paintings in this exhibition are related to the year 2020. However, he quite aware that he is not an expert on current affairs, and his lofty claims on politics and current affairs would resemble sophistry and not conducive to the truth. You can't fool yourself like Pinocchio. As catastrophe approaches, either new or old, crazy, or numb, one has to come up with solutions. In mid-February, Wu Chen returned to Beijing from Zhengzhou. Self-quarantined in his studio, with a fervent impulse to paint. He picked up the brush. At a depth of the painting is a joyous place. He is still the king of his prom.⁴

¹ Book of Matthew 3:17

² Wu Chen's previous solo exhibition is entitled, 'Bad Man Can Also End Up in Heaven.'

³ On March 2, 2020, Jesse Watters, a host of Fox News, publicly demanded a formal apology from the Chinese for the Covid-19 pandemic. This incident incited lasting public outcry and discussion, which inspired Wu Chen to create this painting. 'Sorry,' Mr. Pinocchio says is the second time Wu Chen paints the image of Pinocchio. The first, *Untitled (Every Year Begins in Winter)*. Both artworks were completed during the severe phase of the epidemic in China.

⁴ Wu Chen collected calligraphic works of many ancient Chinese emperors and modern political leaders, who pieced them together to form the phrase, 'Therefore, a lonely God can only be the Orphan of God.' He drew these characters into a series of works. The inscriptions used in the exhibition poster are from this group of artworks. The font for the title of Wu Chen's last solo exhibition, 'Bad Man Can Also End Up in Heaven,' is also composed of the political leader's cursive handwriting.

上地的孤儿

文 | 东门杨

武晨羽毛球打得好。他说这和画画的手感有关：挑个网前小球，就像用笔画一条弧线，轨迹平滑、角度刁钻、落点准确。当然要达到李宗伟的水平，还没那么容易。

北京北五环箭亭桥往北，有个上地。慈禧死前，侍候她的太监苏德传说是这里的地主。武晨画里“上帝的孤儿”更像是那儿的孤儿。他展览标题集字中的古代皇帝活脱是一个个坐着地铁十三号线赶来的，赶来看武晨的新画。展览中的画的确都是2020年的新作。从这一年走过来，自然能领会画家的笔意。瘟疫发的突然，还没来得及在惊恐中估量损失，世界已遽然改变，变得面目全非。仿佛从画中的一个点展开众多条线，直到波及整个画面，溢满后仍不停息地一层层叠加。一觉醒来，每个人必须重新规训自我，以适应变化中的生态与法则。无论呼唤还是咒骂，美好已化作回忆，自由亦成想象，全球化并非全球的造化，世界似乎在我们面前竖起一道道缓缓关闭的大门。幸好还有艺术家留下些许形象的记忆，或自我解嘲，或任人凭吊。

武晨说，在老家过完年，二月中回京，一路辗转，就像在看自己主演的灾难片。深灰色的天，空旷无人的站台，一言不发的北京出租车司机，穿着“太空服”几乎窒息的自己。朋友圈所有人都在谈论一个武汉医生，他脑中却盘旋着鼻子越长越长的匹诺曹。到了画室，他坐立不安，盯着一张即将完成的画作，久久不知所措。灾难面前，似乎艺术家的工作变得越发可疑。如果画面仅是好看的，仅在创作者可循的规则、可自证的思虑中运行，绘画这个行为是否还有存在的必要？他拿起画笔，把画中正在照镜子的公主掀翻在地，暴力地压上一个说谎的木偶（《无题（每一年都是从冬天开始）》，2020）。这是展览画作真正意义上的开始，我们看到滞重的笔触，疑虑的目光，悼亡的仪式。好像一场事先张扬的谋杀案，画家仿佛要与曾经的静好岁月决裂，决意在一系列精心设计的现场连环作案，且绝不手下留情。

就在他展览开幕前不久，我们几个约好去看苏东坡。这是疫情缓和后故宫的第一个大展，人满为患，至少提前一周预约。当天武晨没带身份证，好说歹说，愣是被拒之门外。如今想来，那个象征性的权力所在，那些画面

中被嘲讽的孤儿，又如何让一个为所欲为的画家随便进出？处心积虑进宫，到底行刺未遂，武晨悻悻地说，“心里焦虑，还是回去看杨紫布展。”

乍一看，展厅被营造得明艳敞亮，引得年轻时髦的姑娘们里里外外拍照。但停步细观，又像有股萧煞之气在玩笑中漫延，而横梁上言此及彼的文字重压在白盒子的空间之上，让人隐隐感到某种不安。倒是隐藏在前台玻璃窗后的那张《无题（血溅鸳鸯楼）》（2019）真正点了题——整个空间里环绕的图像、连缀的片段，分明是肆意杀伐的现场。《水浒传》里写武松在张都监家一时快意，“杀得血溅画楼，尸横灯影”。¹武晨也是拼了，憋了一口气，把一年来能说不说的话一股脑儿埋进一帧帧画里。表面上看似一个个无稽的玩笑，画面满是流动的笔触、明快的色彩，走了形的卡通人物，卡通化的物件家什，一切让人忍俊不禁。有朋友开玩笑问，武晨怎么从“坏画”变成“素人”？画面没了以前惯用的结构和手法，乍看去倒像个一味卖傻的孩子。我则提醒他别被表象带偏。看看那些假扮的儿童画和撑门面的卡通面具背后，无论是撅屁股的蜡笔小新、自我分裂的匹诺曹，还是被白兔吞噬的黑色鬼魂，都有着无数面相与分身。再多看一会儿，画面中一些黑色的近乎死亡的气息会渐渐氤氲而出，弥散开去。武晨使劲儿咧着嘴，冲观众傻笑，就好像他画中的那个小丑（《XGJY（只需要美好的一天，最糟糕的人也能变成英雄）》，2019），嘴里塞进根香蕉，笑容被撑到极限，直至眼眶湿润，喉咙哽咽。艾青自问：“为什么我的眼里常含泪水？”²武晨掩埋掉诗人的回答，只让人们在他的假面舞会中嬉笑取乐。

过去的马戏团会编演一些危险刺激的杂技吸引观众，比如空中飞人。演员一次次铤而走险，就难免出错。一旦失手，便会从十几米的高空跌落，伴着观众的尖叫，人落到场地中央动弹不得。整个剧场随之陷入一片死寂，大人能做的就是去捂孩子的眼睛。这时剧团主管会朝后台大喊：“小丑上来！”小丑歪歪扭扭地跑上舞台，插科打诨，搞笑逗乐，就为得有人能趁乱将伤者抬下去，就为得演出可以看似如常地继续。有首经典的爵士歌曲《小丑上来》（*Send*

in the Clowns) 唱的就是跌落演员的内心独白: “难道这一切不够精彩? 我们不是搭档吗? 怎么我跌落到地上, 你还在空中飘荡。请快让小丑上来。”画面里, 那小丑似乎是武晨扮的。

展览开幕在万圣节, 洋人的清明, 不是初春, 而是深秋。必须学会遗忘的人们, 扮作牛鬼蛇神上街, 虚张生事。倒是四壁洁白的魔金石展厅像个真正的巫雉现场, 门框窗框粉成彩色, 好似某种神秘的仪式, 梁上的标题大字如一道道语焉不详的符咒。画家成了祭司, 信手抓取, 画廊内的一切犹如玻璃窗外快速降临的浓重黑夜的一部分。希腊神话中俄耳浦斯从冥界带回的爱人欧律狄刻, 我们在黑夜中看不见她, 只有被艺术家改头换面, 经过重重转喻, 她才能艰难地复现在光线之中。俄耳浦斯必须背对欧律狄刻, 才能将她带出冥府, 只有放弃直视, 才能赋她予形式、状貌和实在。进门的那张《三角形, 圆形, 方形和卡斯伯》(2019) 中, 透明的鬼魂相互勾连簇拥在画室, 挤着颜料, 掐着画笔, 拾起调色盘, 忙作一团。《鬼马小精灵》中的卡斯伯, 正努力让自己显身。不知道是它们借助了画家, 还是画家借助于它们。绘画本身好似一种招魂术, 借尸还魂的并非画家自己, 而是那些欲言又止, 难以说清道明的东西。画家笃信这种仪式, 相信阿尔贝蒂在《论绘画》中所言, “一种神性的力量, 它不仅能将缺席者呈现在眼前, 而且给人以起死回生的神奇”。³ 展览中那些再熟悉不过的卡通形象、日常中的纸笔画具, 逐个被幽灵附体, 置于炫目的舞台, 自编自演着奇幻的故事。

法国诗人普雷维尔 1946 年重临被战火摧毁的布雷斯特海港时写过一首诗《芭芭拉》(Barbara)。大战刚刚结束, 面对硝烟未尽的废墟, 情人试着回忆并不久远的过去, 却再也无法跨越内心的断壁残垣。“还记得吗? 芭芭拉 / 从前布雷斯特这种日子总是阴雨绵绵 / 你笑着走在雨中 / 湿漉漉却满心欢喜……现在也下着雨 / 一切尽毁, 再不复往昔 / 像一首不绝的悼亡曲……”⁴ 武晨模仿弗里达·卡罗画了一组静物西瓜(《无题(西山行旅图)》, 2020)。那是弗里达病逝前的最后一张画, 回望鲜红的青春和丰沛的过往, 她签上“生命万岁(Viva la Vida)”。武晨的画里, 生命开始溃散。女画家的命

题被拆解, 以《溪山行旅图》的结构重新修订。西瓜被拟人化为一个个冷嘲热讽的面孔, 箴言也被模糊地反写在画布底端。仿佛死亡面前一切都不值一提, 天地广大, 逝者如斯, 转念间我们已置身于荒芜。

武晨把画展结束日定在“圣诞节”, 展览的压轴戏则是“最后的晚餐”(《所以, 孤独的上帝只能当上帝的孤儿》(2020), 展览以此画命名), 既是新生也是殉难。颜料桌几乎被掀翻, 七荤八素混作一团, 你中有我, 我中有你, 隐约显现出一张铺展开的世界地图。好像从这张画作“完成的时间”开始, 世界便再也拖拽不住, 一波一波地陷入混乱。大家排排座, 围坐国际艺术大会的圆桌, 彼此不再讲究什么政治正确、外交礼仪, 桌面上横眉竖眼、你来我往, 虽然摊着手, 也不妨碍使绊子、放狠话和骂街。似乎吃完这一顿, 世界便分崩离析, 不管你愿不愿意, 反正脸已撕破, 一拍两散。喜欢做梦的, 还可以继续吸“黄金叶”(《健康, 请勿, 有害, 吸烟, 尽早, 公司》, 2020), 因为那依旧是中国烟民的核心价值。

距离第二次个展已将近三年, 那些“上天堂的坏人”, 这次都成了孤家寡人, 易装的玩偶。“坏人也能上天堂”系列, 与武晨的第一个个展“马蒂斯的裙摆”之间遥相呼应, 而 2020 年的这一批画, 似乎除了一些浅表的线索之外, 很难找到他之前创作的轨迹和延续。无论绘画的材料和技法、造型方式、构图的视角, 还是叙事的层次, 都有着明显的断裂。在这批画中他更看重一种情绪表达的准确实现, 透过堆积的质料, 叠加的色彩, 看似滑稽简单的样貌却充满创痛的笔触与痕迹。武晨选择了一条与以往不相同的路径, 一条看似简单却并不容易的路径。画家试图在诙谐荒诞的表面之下, 隐藏好自己的焦虑、恐惧, 隐藏好所有人的焦虑、恐惧。看得出, 他放下了从前相对便捷的方法, 如今繁复的涂抹、勾勒、设计, 消解了之前画面中的程式。他舍近求远是为了什么? 归根结底, 武晨的新画让我们看到一个艺术家以他的方式真实地面对自己和身处的世界, 像米歇尔·莱里斯在《成人之年》中说的, “让稿纸(画布)在每一次火焰之笔碰触下起皱和燃烧”。⁵ 尽管武晨把这真实掩藏在可笑

得有些幼稚的外衣之下, 如同他自己说的, “终将老去, 即便你是卡通人物”。海绵宝宝也不得不穿上高腰裤, 做个上地的孤儿。

1 施耐庵, 《水浒传》, 上海: 上海古籍出版社, 2019, p.440

2 艾青, 《艾青诗选》, 北京: 人民文学出版社, 1998, p.122

3 阿尔贝蒂, 《论绘画》, 胡珏、辛尘译, 江苏教育出版社, 2012, p.26

4 Jacques Prévert, *Paroles*, Paris: Collection Folio (n° 762), Gallimard, 1949, pp.206-207

5 米歇尔·莱里斯, 《成人之年》, 东门杨译, 北京: 三联书店, 2018, p.8

Shangdi's Orphan

By Dongmen Yang

Wu Chen is a seasoned badminton player. For whom, slinging a birdie before the net is like drawing a curve with the brush, in a smooth trajectory, at a peculiar angle that lands accurately. Of course, it's not that easy to reach Lee Chong Wei's level.

North of the Jianting Bridge on Beijing's Fifth Ring Road is where Shangdi (formerly, the name of a village, which shares the same phonetic as 'God' in Chinese) is located. According to legends, before Empress Dowager Cixi's death, her serving eunuch had been the landlord of this area. 'God's orphan' in Wu Chen's paintings seem to be the orphans from there. The characters painted in the style of many ancient emperors for his exhibition's title seemed to have arrived one by one by subway line 13 to see Wu Chen's new paintings.

The paintings in this exhibition are indeed all new works completed in the year 2020. Having lived through this year, one would naturally grasp the intentions of the artist's brushwork. The sudden onset of the pandemic has abruptly transformed the world entirely without leaving any chance to estimate its losses. It is as if the painting began on a single point, from which many lines unfold until they cover the entire picture plane, overflowing and continuing to build up one upon another. Upon awakening from this trance, one must retrain oneself to adapt to the changing ecology and rules. Whether through calling or curse, wonders have become memories, freedom has become imagination, globalization is not the fortune of the world, and the world seems to be erecting doors closing in front of us. Fortunately, there are still artists leaving some visual memories, either in self-ridicule themselves or reverence.

Wu Chen said, 'After spending Chinese New Year in my hometown, I came back to Beijing in mid-February, and

the journey so treacherous as if I was like watching a disaster movie starring myself. The dark grey sky, the open platform, the silent Beijing taxi driver, and my almost suffocating self dressed in the "space suit". Everyone in his circle of friends talked about a Wuhan doctor, but Pinocchio, whose nose was growing longer and longer, hovered over his mind. When he arrived at the studio, he was restless, staring at an almost completed painting, at a complete loss for words. In the face of catastrophe, it seems that the artist's work becomes more and more questionable. If a tableau is only beautiful to look at, if it operates only within the rules of the artist's traceable rules and self-fulfilling logic, is the act of painting necessary? He picks up a brush, turns the canvas on which a princess looks into the mirror, and violently covers it with a lying puppet (*Untitled (Every Year Begins in Winter)*, 2020). This work is the actual beginning of this exhibition. While we look at the stilted brushstrokes, the skeptical gaze, the rituals of mourning, we have the sense of standing in front of a pre-publicized murder case. The artist has resolutely broken up with the good old days, determined to commit the crime in a series of carefully pre-planned scenes without showing any mercy.

Shortly before the opening of his exhibition, several of us made plans to visit an exhibition of Su Shi at the Palace Museum. The show is the first major exhibition at the Forbidden City since conditions of the epidemic eased. It was overcrowded, so we made reservations at least a week in advance. Wu Chen forgot to bring his ID card that day, who was refused entry despite our tireless persuasion. Now that I think about it, the symbolism of power, the mocked orphans on his canvases, why would the former let a do-as-he-pleases painter go in and out freely? With a calculated attempt to penetrate the palace, upon his failure, Wu Chen said listlessly, 'I feel anxious, and I should go back to check on Yang Zi's installation of the show.'

MAGICIAN SPACE 魔金石空间

At first glance, the exhibition space is lit and spacious, where young and fashionable girls take selfies on the inside and out. But if one were to stop and look closely, there is an air of pessimism that spreads like a joke, while the phrases printed at the top of the walls weigh heavily on white cube exhibition space, making one feel uneasy. Perhaps, the work, *Untitled (Bloodshed on Mandarin Duck Mansion)* (2019), hidden behind the glass window at the gallery reception, hits the nail on the head - the imageries and fragments surrounding the entire space are scenes of wanton killing sprees. In *Outlaws of the Marsh*, it is written that Wu Song's moment of pleasure in the house of Inspector Zhang, 'Blood splattered on the paintings from his killing, and corpses strewn with lanterns and shadows.'¹ Wu Chen gave his all, holding his breath and burying all the things he could and could not say over the past year into the frames of his paintings. These seemingly nonsensical jokes on tableaus are full of flowing brushstrokes, garish colours, warped cartoon characters, animated objects, and furniture; everything makes people simmer with laughter. A friend jokingly asked, 'How did Wu Chen switch from making "bad paintings" to pretending to be an "outsider" artist?' Without his usual structure and technique, the works on canvas look like a silly child has painted them. I warned him not to be distracted by appearances. Look behind the disguised children's drawings and masks of cartoon characters. There are countless aspects and roles, whether it's a pouting Crayon Shin-chan, the schizophrenic Pinocchio, the black ghost devoured by a white rabbit. Some of the dark and nearly morbid impressions began to gradually dense out and disperse with a little more time. Wu Chen grinned

hard at the visitors, just like the clown in his painting (*XGJY (It Only Takes A Great Day to Turn the Worst Man into A Hero)*, 2019), with a banana in his mouth, his smile stretched to its limit until his eyes became moist and his voice choked. Ai Qing asks himself, 'Why do I often have tears in my eyes?'² Wu Chen buries the poet's answer, only to allow people to laugh and make fun of him at his masquerade.

In the past, the circus would choreograph dangerous and exciting acrobatic stunts to attract an audience, with programs performed by trapeze artists. Once the performers took a desperate risk, they would inevitably make mistakes. If they missed, they would fall from a height of more than ten meters. With a screaming audience, they would land in the middle of the ring and become motionless. The theatre would then fall silent, and all the adults could do is covering their children's eyes. This is when the theatre director would yell backstage, 'Clowns up!' Clowns run onto the stage, twisting and turning, gagging and laughing, just so someone would carry the injured performer off, so the show can go on as if nothing had happened. The classic jazz song *Send in the Clowns* echoes the inner monologue of the fallen performer, 'Isn't it rich, are we a pair, me here at last on the ground, and you in mid-air. Send in the clowns.' On the tableaus, Wu Chen seems to be the clowns.

Late in the fall, the exhibition opens on Halloween, the Western equivalent of the Chinese Tomb-sweeping Festival. Those who must learn about forgetting dress up in otherworldly attires to walk the streets and bluff. Instead, the white walls in

Magician Space turn the exhibition space into a site of witchcraft, colour-painted door frames and windows set the tone for enigmatic rituals, and the phrases printed at the top of the walls in large characters look like an unknown incantation. The painter has become a priest, grasping with his hand, and everything in the gallery is like a part of the solemn night that is fast approaching outside of the glass window. In Greek Mythology, Eurydice, the beloved of Oedipus, who was brought back from the underworld, is invisible to us in the night. Only with the artist's recreation of her figure through analogies would she appear under the light. Oedipus must turn his back on Eurydice in order to bring her out of the underworld, and only by giving up the direct appreciation of her beauty can he give her form, shape, and reality. At the entrance, *Triangle, Circle, Tetragonum, and Caspar* (2019), the transparent ghosts collude and cluster in the artist's studio, squeezing paint, cupping brushes, picking up palettes, and busying themselves with each other. Casper, in *Casper the Ghost*, tries to make himself visible. It's unclear whether they draw on the painter or the painter on them. The act of painting is like witchcraft that calls on the spirits, where it is not necessarily the painter who borrows a corpse to return a spirit, but what's unsaid and ineffable. In what Alberti stated in *On Painting*, the painter firmly believes in this ritual, 'Painting contains a divine force which not only makes absent men present, as friendship is said to do, but moreover makes the dead seem almost alive.'³ The familiar cartoon characters and commonplace paper and pencil drawing instruments in the exhibition are possessed by ghosts, placed on a dazzling stage, and act out their own fantastical stories.

MAGICIAN SPACE 魔金石空间

The French poet Jacques Prévert composed the poem Barbara in 1946 when he revisited the war-torn port of Brest. The War had just ended, and facing the smoldering ruins, lovers tried to remember the not-so-distant past but could no longer cross the wasteland within. 'Remember Barbara/ It rained endlessly on Brest that day/ And you walked smiling/ Blooming enraptured streaming/ In the rain.....It rains endlessly on Brest/ As it rained before/ But it's no longer the same everything is gutted/ It is a rain of grief terrible and desolate.....'⁴ Wu Chen appropriated a still-life watermelons in the style of Frida Kahlo (*Untitled (Travelers Among Watermelon Hills)*, 2020). It's the last painting before her death. Looking back at her vibrant youth and rich past, she signed the painting with 'Viva la Vida' (Long Live Life). In Wu Chen's painting, life begins to crumble. The female painter's proposition is dismantled and revised in the structure with *Travelers Among the Mountains and Streams*. Watermelons are anthropomorphized into cynical faces, and aphorisms are blurred backward on the underside of the canvas. It is as if nothing is worth mentioning before death; in the vastness of the world, thus things flow away, and in a flash, we are already in a deserted place.

Wu Chen decided to end the exhibition on Christmas, just like symbolic finale work, *The Last Supper* (as the exhibition also adopts the work of *Therefore, the Lonely God Can Only be Orphan of God* as its title), which could both serve as the beginning of a new life and a martyrdom. The paint table is almost overturned, everything blends into one another in a mishmash that faintly reveals an unfolding map of the world. It

seemed as if from the 'time of completion' of the painting, the world no longer swings but plunges into rounds of chaos. Everyone sits around the round table of the international art forum, no longer paying attention to political correctness or diplomatic etiquette, but exchanging fierce looks with each other on the table, with their hands thrown out, the exchange of tripping, harsh words, and cursing went on unhinged. It seems that once this meal is over, the world will fall apart, whether you like it or not, with resolutions and showing no mercy. For the dreamers, they can continue to smoke 'Golden Leaf' (*Health, No, Harmful, Smoking, ASAP, Company*, 2020), as it still embodies the core value for Chinese smokers.

It has been almost three years since his second solo exhibition at the gallery, and the 'Bad Man Can Also End Up in Heaven' have become lonely, easy pack dolls. The series of works in *Bad Man Can Also End Up in Heaven* echo with Wu Chen's first solo exhibition, 'Matisse's Skirt,' while the series of paintings from 2020, except for some superficial clues, do not fall on the same track or extend from his earlier works. There are apparent ruptures in the materials and techniques of painting, the way of modelling, the approach to composition, and layers of narrative. For this batch of paintings, he attaches more emphasis on the accuracy of emotional expression. The seemingly comic and simple appearance is rendered in traumatic brushstrokes and traces through the accumulated materials and superimposed colours. Wu Chen has chosen a different path, a seemingly simple but difficult one. The artist seems to conceal his own anxieties

and fears, while tucking away the same feelings of others beneath a witty and absurd surface. It is apparent that he's let go of the relatively convenient painting approaches of the past. The complexity of his current smearing, sketching, and planning dissolves the formulaic composition in the previous images. Why is he a glutton for punishment? Ultimately, Wu Chen's new paintings demonstrate an artist who, in his way, chooses to be true to himself and the world he lives in, as Michel Leiris said in *L'Âge d'Homme*, 'The paper (the canvas) would shrivel and flare at each touch of his fiery pen.'⁵ Even though Wu Chen has veiled this truth under a ridiculously childish façade, in his own words, 'Eventually you will grow old, even if you are a cartoon character'. Sponge Bob also has to put on his high-waisted pants and be an orphan of Shangdi.

1 Shi Nai'an, *Outlaws of the Marsh*, Classics Publishing House, Shanghai, 2019, p.440

2 Ai Qing, *Selected Poems of Ai Qing*, People's Literature Publishing House, Beijing, 1998, p.122

3 Alberti, *On Painting*, translated by Hu Jun, Xin Chenyi, Jiangsu Education Publishing House, Nanjing, 2012, p.26

4 Jacques Prévert, *Paroles*, Paris: Collection Folio (n° 762), Gallimard, 1949, pp.206-207

5 Michel Leiris, *L'Âge d'Homme*, translated by Dongmen Yang, Joint Publishing, Beijing, 2018, p.8

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2020.12.13



武晨，《无题（西山行旅图）》，2020，布面丙烯，240 x 200 cm。

北京

武晨

魔金石空间 | MAGICIAN SPACE
北京市朝阳区酒仙桥路2号大山子798艺术区
798东街
2020.10.31 - 2020.12.26

似是同语反复，又似伦理矛盾，尚未见到作品，一入门的展览标题“所以，孤独的上帝就只能当上帝的孤儿”中的逻辑谬误，已经提示了展览中充斥的无意义。武晨从不同古代帝王的碑帖中抽取单字，高饱和的色彩与各异的尺寸使得这句话如同幼童的拼字游戏，天真地讲述着权力的散落无依。

武晨的新作在童年经验中寻找符号，将匹诺曹、蜡笔小新和卡斯伯挪用为当下的寓言。而作品在标题和画面间呈现瘰癧式的关联，

一面是涵义暧昧的绘画叙事，在视觉上呈现出混乱和痉挛；另一面则是直截了当的文字定论，“所以”、“别再”、“都不是”等类似福音书话语的表达，指出了在游戏和漫画中没有模棱两可，更多的是非黑即白。武晨正是在二者的错位中，试图作出他的审判。展厅上方，作品标题的大字横跨墙面和横梁，隐约指涉着798厂房过去的革命口号，政治标语的形式使得荒诞的语句产生了训诫效果。

回到画面中，死亡的意象数度进入视野——骷髅头出现在《三角形，圆形，方形，和卡斯伯》（文中提及作品均创作于2020年）等作品中，《无题（血溅鸳鸯楼）》则直接是一个漫画式的谋杀现场。展览同名大尺幅作品《所以，孤独的上帝就只能当上帝的孤儿》用15块画板分割出十字架的结构，死亡场景被构图逼到角落里，占据其它位置的是神圣的宗教与无序的狂欢，后者正是武晨作品中的另一种感官刺激——管道，是武晨画面中最常见的连接方式，衔接起口与尾，让血液、体液、西瓜汁液和颜料在欲望的器官之间贯通，因异化而变得修长绵软的肢体也变成释出（排泄）的通道。如同三联画的三幅作品《夏天到了就别再写生秋天》、《“Sorry”匹诺曹先生说》、《喜欢屁股的都不是坏人》，分别描画了开膛破肚且鲜血淋漓的兔子，在谎言中自渎的匹诺曹，和正在排泄、脊椎柔软的调色盘。敞开的伤口暴露着大片的肉，明艳的色彩和血淋淋四溅的颜料成为对沉重现实的狂欢性冒犯。然而速干的丙烯被反复涂抹，令血肉上浮着一层塑料感，于是这残酷始终缺乏庄严。

因重复而显得喧嚣的意象在展览中横冲直撞：骷髅头藏身于不同的画面中喃喃着幼稚的诅咒，而西瓜以并无二致的构图方式，压迫性地同时出现在《无题（西山行旅图）》和《无题（You You 别吃了！）》中，将其变为关于暴力的二联习作。在武晨笔下，符号必须不断增殖并成为某种陈词滥调，当其原本的所指被挖空、耗尽，才能填充进新的意义。绘画本身作为创作母题在武晨的画面中同样形成多重身份的递归，颜料不仅是他手上的材料也是他笔下的形象，调色盘既是工具也是主题。那只武晨意图用绘画评论一些既成的事实，例如艺术史，或是令人沮丧的政治气候，但他的画笔和工具也被困在画面里。在自我挣扎中，他的处理方式有意是不洁的，带着欲望、试探和犹疑，这是一个青年画家对现实的回应。

Art | Basel Miami Beach

Fresh paint: seven emerging artists to discover in the Nova and Positions sectors

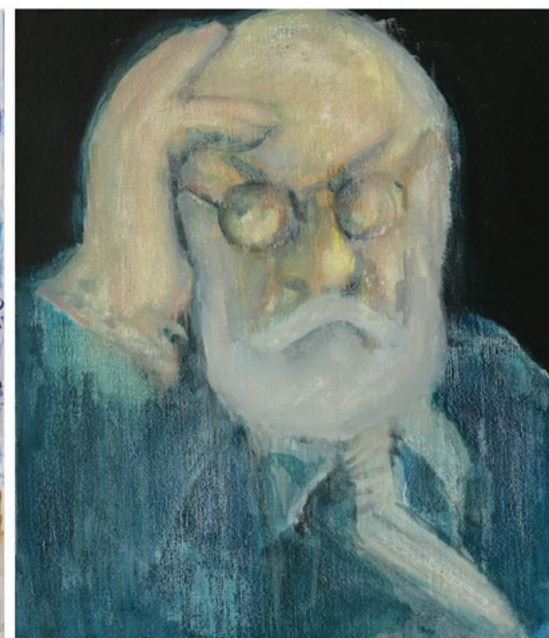
Karim Crippa

Find out how these young painters are updating their medium

Wu Chen (b. 1983, Zhengzhou, China)

Magician Space, Beijing, Positions sector, booth P2

A joyful iconoclasm transpires from the paintings of Chinese artist Wu Chen. Wu paints easily recognizable motives and figures, which he then distorts and places in unexpected environments. In doing so, the artist aims to address the excessive importance we attribute to symbols and images. His Miami Beach project will build on a fictional dialogue between himself and Henri Matisse, pondering on the value of artistic identity and production.



Left: Wu Chen, Mickey's Adventure, 2019. Acrylic on canvas, 250 x 180cm. Right: Portrait of Old Codger Mr. M, 2015. Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 50cm. Courtesy of the artist and Magician Space, Beijing.

MAGICIAN SPACE 魔金石空间

武晨

魔金石空间, 北京

Art | Basel Miami Beach

巴塞尔艺术展
迈阿密海滩展会

“在巴塞尔艺术展
迈阿密海滩展会发掘 7 位艺坛新兴力量”

2019-09-29

新锐探寻 (Positions) 展区
由策展人、艺评人
和收藏家推荐的艺坛新秀展区



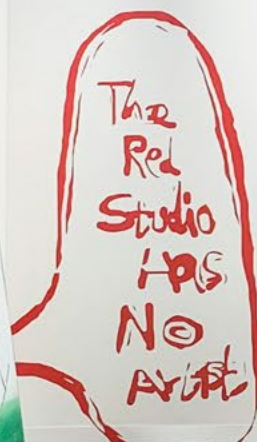
《Rock Chair Rest Area》(2018), 武晨, 图片由艺术家和魔金石空间提供

中国艺术家武晨的作品总是显现一种愉悦的破坏偶像主义 (iconoclasm, 即对于固有形象的破坏与摧毁)。武晨描绘极具辨识度的主题或人物, 然后将其扭曲、并置于意想不到的环境之中。艺术家的这种行为旨在指出符号及图像如今被过于放大的重要性。他于是次展会的作品项目将建立在他与亨利·马蒂斯 (Henri Matisse) 之间虚构的对话基础上, 思考艺术本身以及创作的价值。

P2

Magician Space
Beijing

Wu Chen



7:24



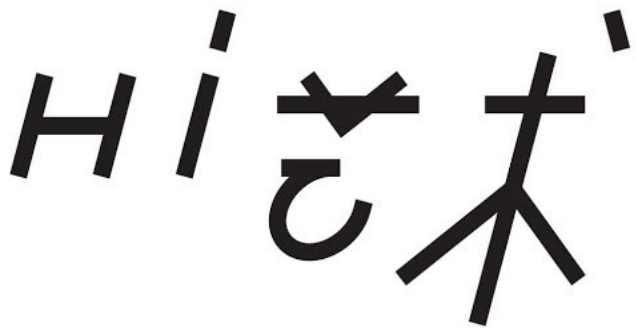


The
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1:20





武晨：无厘头中的严肃调侃

文 | 张朝贝

不久前，武晨在魔金石空间的第二次个展“坏人也能上天堂”开幕，妓院里裸体的圣诞老人、抱着天鹅的本拉登、化身少妇的白雪公主总能让人感觉到一种无厘头式的戏谑感。而策展人刘野在文章中写到，展览标题的第一个字和最后一个字都不好辨认，不要紧，可以只都成“人也能上天”。

不如当个画家有成就感

武晨的家乡是河南郑州，一座典型的“火车拉来的”工业城市。2003年，他考入西南交通大学艺术系绘画专业，家人的态度是既不支持也不反对。不久前，武晨在魔金石空间的个展“坏人也能上天堂”开幕，在多家画廊纷纷亮相的北京画廊周期间依然吸引不少观众驻足观瞻。

清明节假期之前我们约采访时，武晨已经回了成都。再次见到他是在清明节之后，北京连日来春光明媚，武晨身着常服，背着器材跟朋友约了打球。我们在魔金石画廊进行交谈，楼上的空间里展示了展厅里没有展出的部分肖像系列的作品。

武晨曾经谈到自己当初有很多种选择，但最后还是坚持走上绘画这条路，“总感觉那些事都不够当个画家刺激有成就感，内心还是想当个好的画家。”

在成都待了小十年，武晨几乎没有与成都的艺术圈有过交集，“成都的艺术圈主要在城南，我的工作室在城北，跟那个圈子没有什么太大关系。”2014年，武晨从成都来到北京，因为生活比较简单，没事儿的时候都会待在工作室画画，就像他说的，“我可能就是工作室型的艺术家吧。”到2014年底，武晨在魔金石空间做了第一个个展“马蒂斯裙摆”。

严肃与调侃

“坏人也能上天堂”是武晨在魔金石空间的第二次个展，刘野在策展文章中写到：“武晨的作品之间的关系不是重复，而是遥相呼应。2013年《丽达丽达与天鹅》中的肉欲天鹅，2015年则为《坏人也能上天堂》中死后进入了天堂的天鹅。”用葛优，可有时候演的是喜剧，有些时候演的是正剧。”

武晨的作品许多图式取自艺术史的经典作品，熟悉的人都能轻易指出他对经典图式的无厘头式篡改和挪用。从他两年一次个展来看，在“马蒂斯裙摆”中，一张生母怀抱圣子图在他的改造下，更像是一根裸露的生殖器官，怀抱中的圣子更像是卡通化的乳房；而“坏人也能上天堂”中，抱着天鹅的本拉登、裸体的圣诞老人、化身少妇的白雪公主，都给人一种轻松的调侃之感。

在这些无厘头的表达之外，武晨也在绘画中探讨着对画家身份的思考。我们谈话的空间里展示着一件与《无题（一张有兔子的静物画）》相似的作品，主题物由画面中的兔子换成了一个手持调色盘的画家，“这件作品我想表达画家在这个时代遇到的问题。现在的艺术世界，因为各种媒体、各种材料而更加多元化了，像‘绘画死亡’的论调也提了很久，我只是对这个问题进行一种思考，或者说联想。”

从成都到北京

Hi: 2014年来北京的契机是什么？是因为“马蒂斯裙摆”那次个展吗？

武：不是，我是来北京画了一段时间之后才有那次展览。当时在成都，那个地方还是相对比较封闭的，缺少和公众的交流，感觉越画越没有动力，很早就产生了来北京换换环境的想法。

Hi: 来北京之后感觉有什么变化？对创作有哪些影响？

武：感觉变化还是挺大的，最直观变化的就是来北京能看到很多好的展览。创作上的影响不是一个直观的变化，它是潜移默化的，可能不能很明显地反映到画面中，但是我能感觉到它对我自身的一些影响。

Hi: 现在你每天大概工作多长时间？会跟其他艺术家进行创作上的交流吗？

武：我挺喜欢一个人待在工作室。我感觉我可能就是工作室型的艺术家，待在工作室让我感觉很舒服和安心。北京有一个好处，就是有很多艺术家，如果你想交流的话还是很容易。其实展览或是去看展览也是一个交流过程。

Hi: 在西南交大的时候，你算是师从谢南星，你的这个展览策展人是刘野，他们对你创作有什么影响吗？

武：谢南星是我入校第一节老师，当时我们对当代艺术没什么了解，都是从考前班出来的，他算是最早跟我们提这个概念的人。其实面对艺术或是绘画问题的时候所有艺术家都是一样的，对我来讲，谢南星、刘野这样的艺

术家最值得我学习的，是他们对待艺术的态度和对绘画的理解。具体到创作来说没什么直接影响，我觉得每个艺术家都是在发现和解决自身的问题。

Hi: 为什么选择刘野做这次展览的策展人？

武：我和刘野老师是在一次打球中认识的，那个时候我刚来北京，他听说我也是画画的之后就去我工作室看看作品。看过觉得还挺感兴趣的，买了我几件作品，可以说他是我来北京的第一个藏家，在当时给了我很大的鼓励 and 信心。之后我画完一批作品也会请他来看看交流一下。从2014年到2017年刘野老师一直对我的作品有一个了解，所以我觉得请他来策划这个展览最合适。

同样的形象，不同的东西

Hi: 你的作品更偏向从西方艺术史中汲取一些养分？

武：我所受的教育和所看到的东西可能本来就是以西方艺术史为主。对艺术史的不断学习也是我的一个癖好，对一些具体的作品的理解和认识也会随着自身的成长不断的变化，我觉得我所做的就是使自己对一些问题的认识更加具体化，有可能现在我对绘画或是一些问题的认识是幼稚的，那我就真实地去表达我这种幼稚。

Hi: 这次展览中有两张作品使用了大面积的红色，之前好像没有这样用过。

武：对我来讲因为红色还是挺难画的，因为这个颜色它比较躁，不太稳，尤其是大面积地使用。但那两张作品需要这个颜色，你看那些情色场所总是喜欢红色，可能因为这个颜色它特别挑逗，更能刺激荷尔蒙分泌。

Hi: 为什么天鹅、椰子树这些形象在你作品中反复出现？

武：对描绘对象的选择我是有所考虑的，但不一定都是同一个指向。有一些导演经常用一些自己比较熟悉的演员，但是表演的东西是不一样的，比如说冯小刚老用葛优，但是有时候演喜剧，有些时候演正剧。这些形象就像我熟悉的演员一样，它配不同的戏，要说的东西可能就不一样。

Hi: 你的作品中有几件倒挂的形象？有什么联系吗？

武：它们的形象都是一样的，但互相没有必然的联系。作品用到哪种具体的形象，都是一种机缘巧合，当然它都是一个思考的结果，可能我会觉得倒挂着比正立着表达更加准确。

武晨对话刘野

刘野：我发现我们俩有一个共同点，都喜欢用丙烯画，你基本都是用丙烯吧？

武晨：对，我都是用丙烯。

刘野：那你为什么不用油画画呢？或是你当时怎么形成用丙烯画画的方式呢？

武晨：油画干得太慢了。我在画一张画的过程中情绪起伏比较大，我需要先快速地把第一感觉给记录下来，然后再去慢慢调整，如果每一遍都画太慢的话呢，会减弱我的情绪。

刘野：嗯，比起油画来，丙烯它确实有一个方便，就是它不用“等干”。

武晨：并且丙烯媒介剂也很丰富，想让它干得慢点也可以。刘老师你那种画也需要慢干剂吗？

刘野：不用，其实我就喜欢丙烯的快干，当即我就能看出效果。但丙烯的缺点就是不够厚重，需要多画几遍才能出效果。

武晨：丙烯对我来讲确实方便，更容易上手。我的绘画习惯就是在电脑上把图片处理后就开始画，在绘画的过程中不断地去调整。丙烯这种方便性会让我的胆子放大。

刘野：你获得一种自由嘛。等于你的画经常是处在一种画的过程中，她既是成品也是草稿。整体看你的画，你经常用同一题材画几张作品，而且时间跨度上比较长。比如 2014 年你画了《怪兔子了解绘画之后》，2015 年你又画了《无题（一张有兔子的静物画）》，主体物几乎相同，你是出于怎样的一种考虑？

武晨：这两张画的时间点对我来讲比较特殊。2014 年那张画我是在成都画的，那时候我还没有来北京。

2015 年那张画是我把工作室搬到北京，而且是在 2015 年年初刚做完个展后画的。

刘野：2014 之前你是一直在成都画画是吗？为什么会来北京呢？

武晨：我从 2007 年毕业之后一直就在成都画画。刚毕业那个时期其实还不是很自信，总感觉自己需要再沉淀积累几年。其实在成都，我和成都艺术圈几乎也没有任何关系，就是自己画画。慢慢我发现自己总会陷入到一个小世界里，缺少和公众的交流，感觉越画越没有动力。2012 年我几乎一张像样的作品都没画出来，直到 2013 年才慢慢找到一些新感觉，期间也产生了来北京换换环境的想法。当时我给自己制造了一个幻想，就是三年后会会有一个自己的个展，我假设着那时所有的作品都是为那个虚无的个展做准备。《怪兔子了解绘画之后》差不多是我来北京前在成都画的最后一张画，我把自己比喻成博伊斯怀中的死兔子，珍珠、金色十字架吊牌都只是一个幻想。毫不掩饰地讲，我希望我这只怪兔子能在北京找到自己的机会，能拥有自己的一片天地。而《无题（一张有兔子的静物画）》那张画，是在第一个个展后画的，虽然第一个个展在准备的时间上还是有些仓促，但是对我来讲第一次的亮相还是很重要。

刘野：艺术还是需要交流的，要不然她就变成了自娱自乐。你第一个展览挺好的，我也是通过那个展览才对你有一个全面的了解。你看似很幸运其实还是积累了很久。

武晨：嗯，第一个展览之后紧接着是参加了香港巴塞尔艺博会，再之后是上海 O21 艺博会我的个人项目，这些机会都是我在成都时所想象不到的。《无题（一张有兔子的静物画）》那张画里的兔子明显轻松了。

刘野：你第一张作品中那个兔子看起来虽然也很生动，但第二张明显大胆了很多。红色线条的兔子感觉还是

拟人化的，那个臀部到腰那块就很像一个性感的女人身体。

武晨：其实这两张画也是关于资本、绘画还有艺术家之间的关系，或是说这个时代，资本和艺术之间的关系。对我来讲，画廊和市场的介入有一个很大的好处就是让你的自信心可以得到提升。我觉得资本像鸦片或是某种药物，它有好处必然也有副作用。而且从宏观上来说，一个地区经济的繁荣也能促使好艺术的产生。

刘野：绝大部分好的艺术都是产生于经济较好的地区。比如朝鲜就很难产生出好的当代艺术。今天资本的力量确实有很大问题，但关键还是看艺术家自身。比如说伦勃朗，你不能因为他前期卖得好就说他是一个不好的艺术家，后期因为落寞了就说他是一个好艺术家。一个艺术家的好或是不好，资本在里面一定有所作用，但绝对不会是决定性作用。而且以前艺术家的经济来源只有订单画，或是依附于权力，路径更单一。我们这个时代做艺术其实更加自由。

武晨：嗯，资本和艺术的关系太复杂了，荷兰当时能有那么多伟大的艺术家可能也和大航海时代有关系。其实我对很多问题的思考都是自我的片面理解，而且很多时候是建立在假设或想象上。我希望我能真诚表达，即使有可能是幼稚的，那我就努力准确表达我的幼稚。还拿《无题（一张有兔子的静物画）》这张来说，从生蚝中取出的珍珠和纯金打造的十字架不一定是般配的，而这一切对画家来说可能就出自发光的调色盘，很有可能涂满金色的博伊斯就在跟那只死兔子讲这些事情。不是有一句充满哲理的废话：这是最好的时代也是最坏的时代。那我是不是也可以说：资本是艺术最好的朋友也永远是她的敌人。

刘野：挺有意思的，我觉得你的绘画看起来有些“严肃的玩世不恭”，但你这种“严肃的玩世不恭”的态度和我这一代的那些艺术家又是不一样的。比如我们那一代多是针对社会环境，而你的态度更多是黑色幽

默式的自我解读。你的作品看起来很随意，但实际上你还是思考了很多，观察了很多，然后才做决定的。《无题（一张有兔子的静物画）》你这张画中的形象是倒挂着的，那张《坏人也能上天堂》里的天鹅也是倒挂着的，是不是她们之间也有一些关系？

武晨：虽然在形式上有共通的地方，但总体上来说她们还是独立存在的。《坏人也能上天堂》这张和2013年画的那张《丽达丽达和天鹅》还有后面那张《无题（坏人也能上天堂二）》可能关系更加紧密。

刘野：2013年那张感觉还是对肉体欲望的描绘，怎么到2015年这张变成了《坏人也能上天堂》呢？

武晨：丽达与天鹅这个绘画题材从达·芬奇开始一直被无数的艺术家进行演绎，而且几乎都是对丽达与天鹅的情感或是肉欲的表达，《丽达丽达和天鹅》那张我也是延续了那种情欲的表达。到《坏人也能上天堂》我其实是想为这个题材画一个句号，就是我自己假设了这张画是丽达与天鹅这个绘画题材的结局。我在画布上对宙斯实行了惩戒，各种小天鹅像是古典画中的天使散落在宙斯这只受惩罚的大天鹅的四周。画完这张之后其实我还不是特别过瘾，又画了一张拉登抱着天鹅那张，也就是《无题（坏人也能上天堂二）》。就是假想拉登也不一定比宙斯坏到哪去，宙斯也比拉登好不了多少，人性这东西其实是最单纯的，也是最复杂的。

刘野：“好人”“坏人”在一定条件下也会相互转换，我觉得人特别重要的一点，要承认和意识到自身有恶的那一面。搞艺术的有一好处，就是可以把你的“坏”在画布上尽情体现。

武晨：之前我画过一张关于希特勒的肖像（《无名画家的肖像》），我就是把他当成一个平静的画家来画。如果希特勒把他的野心和坏用在艺术上，可能就多了一个三流艺术家，少了个战争狂人。当然这也只是我的一个假设。

刘野：蓝色背景三个人体这张大画，之前也有一张类似的，这个主体人物是《草地上的午餐》里的吗？

武晨：对。这张是2016年画的叫《无题（男人体和男人体，男人体和女人体，女人体和男人体之间的关系）》，另一张是2014年画的名字少了无题。其实更早之前还画过一张《如何观看一张抽象画》，里面用的也是《草地上的午餐》那三个人。《如何观看一张抽象画》是我假设马奈在刚刚开启现代主义大门的那个时代看到后现代主义——抽象画的反应，马奈笔下的两位绅士和裸体的缪兰万万没想到他们竟然被这些几何图形，线条组成的绘画所颠覆。2014年和2016年那两张我更多的是对这三个模特之间心理活动的描绘，我希望站在这三个模特背后，对他们的背影进行观察，可能男主角喜欢女主角，女主角爱上了男二号，而男二号对男主角的爱更多。如果说2013年那张是穿越剧的话，2014年2016年这两张更像是无聊的狗血剧，2016年这张通过背景和椰子树的穿插来加强这种荒诞。

刘野：我突然想到一词来形容你的艺术或是你这个人——无厘头，可能比玩世不恭，幽默什么的更加准确。

武晨：为什么会想到这个词呢？

刘野：你这个绘画和你的描述包括你给画起的名字，特别像周星驰的电影，开始感觉就是乱七八糟，毫无逻辑，但不会觉得一点道理没有，越深入地了解，越能透过其嬉戏，调侃反讽的表象触及到你对事物的表达。而且你选的兔子，天鹅这些形象看似是没有什么道理，但其实特别适合你这种画。还有椰子树这个形象，这种树是很难入画的，弄不好就会显得特别俗气，但被你这么无厘头地一弄，在画面中还显得很恰当，很有寓意。

武晨：说到椰子树也挺逗的。有一次我和谢南星聊天，不知道怎么聊到了塞尚的大浴女，我突然在想塞尚用来分割画面的那几根树干会是什么树呢？第一反应就是椰子树，可能这是潜意识里有内地人对大海的美好

向往。

刘野：嗯，准确地选择你所要画的物体和对象是一种天赋，也是一个好的艺术家必须要有的素养，你所选择的物体从表面看起来都没什么道理，但让人感觉这些物体放在你的画中就是准确的，这也是你绘画天赋很好的一种体现。红色那张大画也是你的新画吧？

武晨：是，这张是我的自画像（《无题，2016年自画像》），这个和去年画的《少妇历险记》有点关系，这张主要是想通过上面那面镜子，来制造一个心理空间。

刘野：你这张画，让我想到了委拉斯贵支《镜前的维纳斯》那张画。我发现你的画啊，有一个经常出现的线索——都是与艺术史上的作品在对话的关系，虽然你的思路很跳跃，但它还不是一个没有线索的构思。

武晨：对，因为我觉得对画家来讲，一直也都有这种关系在里面，委拉斯贵支那幅画也会让人联想到威尼斯画派乔尔·乔纳《沉睡的维纳斯》。艺术史对画家来讲有点像本字典，这可能也是画家的一个优势，要不然没有根基，硬去创造一个新的东西还是太困难了。

刘野：其实这个牵扯到的问题就是绘画嘛，到底你是关于现实的，还是关于绘画的。简单来说两种大的路径，有一种是我的灵感来源于现实，还有一种就是我的绘画来源于其他人的，某种程度上也可以说关于绘画的绘画。我觉得你的绘画还是关于绘画的绘画。

武晨：嗯，其实我对绘画的一切都有很强的好奇心，比如画家自身的肖像，画家的工作室，画家用的工具，包括他的模特等等，这可能也是我选择架上绘画的原因。比如去国外的博物馆或是观看展览的时候，虽然有大量的作品是影像或装置，我当然也有兴趣去了解和感知，但对我来说，最解渴的还是看绘画作品。所以可能我个人的兴趣点就在这个上面，就选择了用绘画来表达我对绘画的理解。

刘野：我发现你的好奇心是挺重的，可能这种好奇心

和之后的思考也是推动你做这种绘画的一个动力。

武晨：我个人就是那种喜欢长期独自在工作室画画的艺术家的，一个人的独处可能也会容易让人胡思乱想。再来说说《无题（2016 年自画像）》这张吧，你在开始说这使你联想到了《镜前的维纳斯》，对，其实镜子一直在绘画中有很重要的作用，它不光是在二维平面里创作第三个空间，很多时候镜子还建立了一个心理空间，比如像培根的很多画里的镜子。

刘野：你这张画镜子里是一个变型后的人体吗？

武晨：对，镜子里的形体是女人体和男人体的结合体。我其实希望对每个看画的观众做个关于性取向的小测试。刘老师你第一眼看到的是什么呢？

刘野：那个是乳房吧？那个是肚脐眼吧？

武晨：嗯，一个男人一眼就从女人那方面看，那他应该就是是个直男。这当然是我个人假设的啊，不一定准确。

刘野：直男是指我喜欢女性是吗？

武晨：对。

刘野：那肯定是（哈哈），看久了其实也有点像一个男性的生殖器，是吗？

武晨：对，我是用了一个女性的身体局部，让这个形体又有点男性器官的意思。不是有种说法，每个人体内都有同性恋的基因，只是有些人这种基因比较多有些比较少而已，我也想测试一下自己。画这张的时候我还发现一特逗的事，这张画背景是一个色情场所，在网上找图的时候发现很多色情场所都挂着古典油画的复制品，圣母啊，圣婴啊，安格尔的浴女什么的，好像色情和艺术真是有紧密的关系。

刘野：其实这就是人性嘛，情色是人性中很重要的一部分，也一直是绘画中一个很重要的题材。其实绘画

从题材上来说，不是越来越宽泛，而是愈发窄，愈发在某种程度上有关系，关键是你到今天用什么方式去表达，这特别有意思。

武晨：很多时候我觉得绘画就是用来表达自己的认识，跟一个评论家或学者，用文字来描述一张画一个理论是一个道理，不同的是我只对自己负责，可以展开无边的联想。

刘野：这等于是你的一个再创作，完全是一张新画。绘画的主题其实也没有那么多。比如小说，其实小说总的来讲就是一个题材，就是男女谈恋爱的故事。最早“小说”英语就是“romance”罗曼史，浪漫。当然，后面一些小说不写谈恋爱。但总的来说主流经典小说就是不同的作家用不同的方式写男女谈恋爱，看谁写的好，写的有意思，你看《红楼梦》、《简爱》、《安娜·卡列尼娜》等等。

武晨：好像有人说过，艺术史就是部色情史，那小说就是部恋爱史，哈哈。

刘野：所以，绘画的主题并不像想象得那么多，而且不用开发得太多，我觉得绘画的有效性在于你得有文化记忆，她才有效。《少妇历险记》这张看起来也是充满色情因素的一张画。

武晨：《少妇历险记》不止是有色情因素，她还像是一个谋杀现场。我希望她是一个混搭风格的作品，有点像昆汀的电影。童话里的白雪公主和现实中长大的白雪少妇，邪恶的女王从漫画闯进现实白雪少妇的闺房，一双冷静的脚预示着另一个空间还有其他人在关注这一切的发生，这个人有可能是我，或是观众本身。总之这可能就是一切高潮的前戏。

刘野：你这张画里的脚画得特别有意思，一下把一个童话故事给拉到现实了，这个脚像一个药引子，加强了这张画的荒诞性。现在很多好的艺术作品里都有荒诞性，即使是一张抽象绘画，好的抽象绘画里面其实也有荒诞性。你还画过一张《抽象艺术家的具象肖像》

我还挺喜欢的，刚开始我不知道画的是什么，后面看你的题目再看你的画发现这里面有一种反讽又带有一种悖论，这两种关系在一张画中同时存在还是很有意思的。

武晨：这张画画的是肖恩·斯库利。我个人对他的画不是特别感兴趣，其实我对抽象绘画一直没有很好的感觉和认识。但我对他这个人很感兴趣，可能因为他是爱尔兰人，爱尔兰足球队标志人物罗伊·基恩，还有 U2 乐队，一直是我喜欢的。我感觉他的抽象画有种对颜料和画布的暴力宣泄，如果他是用抽象的方式来表达他的情感的话，那我就是用个具象的方式来表达我对他的抽象画的片面理解。

刘野：我在上海看过他的展览。如果蒙德里安是典型知识分子抽象艺术家的话，他就是典型的工人阶级抽象艺术家。他出身本来也是工人阶级，他的有些画里还是有一种感人的东西，抽象画很容易变得优雅和装饰，他的画里还是有些粗野的东西在里面。

武晨：我也是工人阶级出身，我对这种看似缺乏教养的东西挺感兴趣，他里面有种浑不吝的劲。我记得上初中的时候买过一本足球杂志介绍爱尔兰队，“桀骜不驯，不畏强暴”是对他们的评价，欧洲杯和世界杯他们只赢过三场，赢了英格兰，赢了意大利。我在 2015 年画过一张《自画像》，那是在第一个个展之后画的，那张画我是想把自己画成一个屠夫，脸部也是黑乎乎一片，五官抽象成男性性器官的感觉，其实我也是在提醒自己要对自己有清醒的认识，保持自己的野劲儿。

刘野：“工人阶级必须领导一切。”这是我小时候常听到的一句话。你好像也一直有画自画像和艺术家肖像的习惯。

武晨：是的，我对艺术家肖像一直很感兴趣，《姓无名题》这张画最初的想法也是想画一张关于王兴伟老师的肖像。

刘野：这张画的构思怎么来的呢？

武晨：这张画最初的想法是从王老师的一张照片来的，在那张照片里他穿着工作服，一手拿着他自制的长笔，一手拿一个挺大的调色板，特像一个中世纪身穿铠甲保卫绘画的战士或是什么的。我就按王老师的工作方式，一开始做比较完整的小稿。我先用鼠标绘了一张，在电脑上用鼠标画有一个问题，就是没有真正训练你的手，手上感觉不够，然后我就又画了几张线描稿。最后才有了这张《姓无名题》。

刘野：这张画第一眼，让我想起符号了，就是这张画好像是各种符号组成的。胸前像一个“欧元”的符号，还有一个“V”，嘴那块像是一个“令”，你是这样安排的吗？

武晨：哈哈，这种解读挺逗的。你一说呢，我还觉得真有点像。但我没往那想，“欧元”那个是铠甲，中世纪骑士那种。

刘野：你知道我怎么想到符号了嘛？我小时候刚开始画画，我们院有一个开公共汽车的老司机，说画画是这么画，眼睛是两个6，然后什么横过来一个8是帽子，3是耳朵，倒过来的7是鼻子什么的，这张画让我想起那个来了。

武晨：我的画就是从从一个假设开始展开联想的，在画这张画的过程中我的关注点从一开始对一个个体画家的描绘转换成画家和这个时代的关系的想象。我觉得这个时代的画家特像堂吉柯德，没有目标了，但骨子里还是有种轴劲儿，或是信仰什么的，但这种信仰有时候也有可能是可笑的。当然这只是我自己的一个解释，其实用文字去解读一张画总是危险的。你说的那个“欧元”符号，也挺有意思。

刘野：关于艺术家肖像和各种样式的“自画像”你一共画了多少张？

武晨：从2012年开始就断断续续的画了十几不到

二十张的样子。自画像大概一年画一到两张，可能是因为我是狮子座太自恋的原因，我还挺喜欢画自画像的，从某种意义上来说我的每张画其实都是我的自画像。艺术家肖像大概有十张左右，都是我在某一个时间段内对这些艺术家的认识和理解，随着我对他们认知的变化也有可能对有些艺术家的肖像进行再次创作。艺术家肖像是我会一直坚持的一个题材，我希望用我画的艺术家肖像画来创造一部属于我自己的艺术史。

刘野：每个人可能都有他自己喜欢的艺术家和不太喜欢的，这本来就是很个人化的一个问题，比如蒙德里安就是我喜欢的艺术家，他也是对我很重要的一个艺术家。可能对你来说他就没有那么重要。一个艺术家喜欢谁的作品也是判断或了解这个艺术家很重要的一个方面。你喜欢谁的作品，或是对你很重要的艺术家有哪些？

武晨：马蒂斯，他对我来说是一个类似于启蒙性的艺术家，我觉得他特像一个绘画老师，能教你很多具体关于绘画的东西。比如怎么用色彩来表达，怎么用线条概括一个形体什么的。我也画过一张关于马蒂斯的画《假如马蒂斯出生在美国》，这个假设是荒谬的，但从马蒂斯之后，美国艺术家做的东西来看，已经有他的基因在里面了。每次我不知道怎么画或是画什么的时候，我总喜欢翻翻他的画册。

刘野：我还发现一问题，你画的名字还是挺有意思的，画的名字对于你的画来说起到了延伸和扩展的作用。

武晨：对，如果说画一张画的前期思考是受精，画的过程是怀孕，画的完成是新生命降临的话，那给画起名字就像给新生儿起名字一样。名字也是给观众阅读你绘画的一个入口和通道。我喜欢把名字起得有意思一点。刘老师你怎么给画起名字呢？

刘野：我的画的名字还是比较严肃。画和画不一样，起名字的方式也不一样。你的这种无厘头式的绘画配你那种有点特殊的名字它就合适。我的画有些名字只

有英文没有中文，比如有一张小女孩抱着一只猪的小画，特有意思的是，这张画有一次拍卖，他们把名字杜撰成了“还猪格格”，这就不合适了。

武晨：“还猪格格”，（哈哈哈哈哈）这比我无厘头多了。

刘野：所以你的艺术和你这个人的气质，你要做的东西，你的技术，包括你起的名字，都要匹配，需要专业的表达方式。

武晨：对，怎么画我觉得是这一切的核心。

刘野：所以你认为绘画还是很需要技术的？

武晨：技术还是很重要。我觉得技术就是去传递或具体化你想法的一个工具，准确不准确就看你手上功夫怎么样了。

刘野：我觉得技术的好坏，有时候意味着和你要表达的东西是否恰当，这个是判断技术好坏的标准。你这种比较糙的绘画技术就和你的表达很配套。你学画经历大概是怎么样的呢？

武晨：最早就是高中考前班，但学的时间短，考美院什么肯定没戏，也不想回读，就上了西南交大绘画专业。我小时候就很喜欢画画，上小学的时候我爸爸专门给我找过一个老先生教画画，我记得特清楚的是那位老先生用钢笔画马画得挺好的，教我画我就喜欢给马画翅膀给马画上犄角什么的，我给我画的马起名叫跨海麒麟兽，老先生来了几次就再也没来过了。之后我自己临七龙珠，画各种漫画。

刘野：（哈哈）现在还有点七龙珠那个感觉，挺无厘头的。

武晨：对，鸟山明给我启的蒙，（哈哈）。其实我一直没经过特严格的那种绘画训练。大学第一节课就是谢南星上，他主要让你尽快忘掉考前班那套东西，进入到创作状态。我大一就跟一帮朋友在校外租工作室画画。我觉得我一直都是野路子。

刘野：你看你小时候画七龙珠这种无厘头的漫画，我们这一代也临小人书，都是现实主义那些，《鸡毛信》什么的，最无厘头的就是《西游记》，孙悟空被塑造成反封建压迫的战士。像你们七龙珠一代弄无厘头的东西，他有一种自然而然的东西。

武晨：那个时候这么理解《西游记》，在今天看来也挺无厘头的，（哈哈）。对，我觉得真诚表达很重要。刘老师，我最近也在想一个问题，就是绘画难度问题，以前艺术史可能是一个从古典到印象派到现代主义到后现代的线性发展过程，后现代之后突然感觉没有目标了，感觉画什么都行画什么也都不行。

刘野：我觉得抽象表现主义之后，整体来看绘画形式上的探索已经结束了，好像进入了虚无主义，他让你感觉到画什么都行，画什么都不对。

武晨：画什么都行，画什么都不对，特别准确。之前艺术史上最重要的艺术家就是在形式探索上或对艺术的认识上有贡献。今天来看，绘画的可能性在哪里呢？

刘野：这个问题太大了，但是我老觉得，你决定要画画，在某种程度上就决定了你已经在和历史发生关系。就是说，不一定你的最主要工作是扩展新的边界，可能是在整合过去发生的事儿。绘画其实不像想象得那么自由，她有一套自己的规则，而且跟一千年前比，她那个大的规则，也并不像你想象得变了那么多。绘画基本上来说，就是在矩形里边做游戏，高级游戏。

武晨：嗯，越对艺术或是绘画了解，越觉得她是一个难度很大的游戏。绘画艺术有点像中国象棋，象棋招数的变化已经在无数的对弈过程中几乎穷尽了，但你不能为了创新去改变马走日象走田这些基本规则。

刘野：改变这些基本规则后可能就不再是中国象棋了，就变成另一种游戏了。绘画这里面还是有一个最基本的东西，是根据这些最基本的东西来判断好与不好。而且使用一些其它方式对绘画来讲很容易让力量使偏。在一个朴素的平行四边形内你要想有突破，其实是非

常难的。

武晨：面对绘画艺术这座高山，其实我感觉我还刚入门。我所需要的就是真诚表达，在画布上使劲地折腾。

刘野：你要是认准了绘画这条路一直走，你会发现虽然绘画很难但她确实有意思。

武晨：对，有难度的游戏才有意思，很容易通关的游戏也玩不长久。关于这个展览的题目，我最近也想了想。

刘野：你想的是什么？

武晨：我想用《坏人也能上天堂》这张作品的名字做这个展览的题目。

刘野：你希望所有人都能上天堂，包括“坏人”。跟你这个无厘头风格也挺契合的。

武晨：（哈哈）“坏人”确实有他的魅力，那就用这个来做这次展览的题目。

刘野：可以，用这个挺合适的。

Interview: Wu Chen & Liu Ye

Liu Ye: I discovered we have something in common. We both like using acrylic. You practically only use acrylic right?

Wu Chen: Yes, I use only acrylic.

Liu Ye: So why not oil painting then? Or maybe explain a little of how you arrived at this method of using acrylic?

Wu Chen: Oil painting takes a while to dry. When I'm painting, my mood often changes during the moment. I need the quickest method to record an initial mood down first and then I slowly adjust things from there. If with every step, there was a long moment in-between, then the strength of that mood diminishes.

Liu Ye: Yes. Compared with oils, acrylic has the added convenience of not needing to wait long to dry.

Wu Chen: Besides that, there is a richness to working with acrylic - you can also let it dry slowly too if you wanted. For your own painting, does it normally need a while to dry?

Liu Ye: Not really, actually I like that acrylic dries quickly and that I can see the results. The only downside to acrylic is maybe its lack of body - you have to paint over a few times before you get an effect.

Wu Chen: For me, there is a technique to using acrylic, which makes things easier to control. My paintings normally begin by first arranging images onto the computer and then I continually make adjustments while painting. The ease that acrylic allows me enables me to work with a lot more gusto.

Liu Ye: You gain a certain kind of freedom. It means that

your work is already situated within a particular process of painting - it's both the sketch as well as the finished article. Looking at your painting as a whole, you regularly return to the same subject in a number of your works. Moreover, the duration between the works can be comparatively long too. For example, there is the 2014 painting, *Weird Rabbit After Understanding Painting*, which you paint again in 2015, *Untitled (Still-life with a Rabbit)* - the subject is pretty much the same. What were you thinking about in regards to these works?

Wu Chen: The time between the two paintings is very special to me. The painting in 2014 was made while in Chengdu and I hadn't yet left for Beijing. The work in 2015 was after I moved my studio to Beijing. On top of that, it was the end of 2015 when I had just completed a solo show too.

Liu Ye: Before 2014, were you always in Chengdu painting? Why did you move back to Beijing then?

Wu Chen: Since graduating in 2007, I stayed in Chengdu to paint. Actually, just after graduating, I wasn't feeling particularly confident and had the feeling I needed a few years to build something up. In Chengdu, I practically had no connection to the art scene and was just painting by myself. Slowly, I realized I was beginning to sink too much into my own world and lacked a dialogue with an audience - the more I painted in this situation the more it made me feel powerless. In 2012, there was little work of note that came by. By 2013, I gradually began to find a new feeling. Meanwhile, I had this idea to change scene and move to Beijing. It was during that moment, I had a fantasy that my own solo exhibition would happen in the next three years. I put myself in a mindset where everything I was working on, was in preparation for this exhibition that had not yet

existed. *Weird Rabbit After Understanding Painting* was essentially the last painting completed in Chengdu before my move to Beijing. I imagined myself as Beuys holding a dead rabbit - the pearls and gold cross necklace were added as elements of my imagination. To be quite frank, I was hoping this rabbit could find its own opportunity and place in Beijing. Then with *Untitled (Still-life with a Rabbit)* this was after my solo exhibition opened. Although the first show happened quickly, I think this debut public appearance was very important to me.

Liu Ye: Yes, the artist still needs a dialogue - otherwise it becomes mere self-amusement. Your first show was interesting and it was through this that I got a better sense of you too. If you look at it, even though in some ways you were lucky, this was something you had been building up towards for quite a while now.

Wu Chen: After that first show, things happened quickly with works in Art Basel Hong Kong and then a solo presentation at Art 021 in Shanghai. All these things were hard to imagine when I was in Chengdu. The rabbit in *Untitled (Still-life with a Rabbit)* is noticeably more relaxed in that work.

Liu Ye: Although the first rabbit looks rather more lively, in the second work, he looks significantly more brazen in demeanor. The rabbit with a red outline feels more anthropomorphic - from the hindquarters to the waist - it is similar to a sexy woman's figure.

Wu Chen: These two paintings also connect

together: wealth, painting, and the artist. The good thing about being involved with a gallery and the market is that it allows you to promote yourself with confidence. I see money as something like opium or medication; there are benefits, but also inevitably side effects too. From a wider perspective, a region of economic prosperity can also bring about good art.

Liu Ye: The majority of great art has been produced in regions with a relatively good economy. For example, if you were in North Korea, it would be hard to have good contemporary art there. For sure, the power of capital is also a big issue today too. But the buck still stops with the artists themselves. Take Rembrandt as an example, you cannot say that he is a bad artist because he sold well early on. Normally, people say because he suffered a difficult time afterwards - that's what makes him a good artist. Whether an artist is good or bad, money certainly plays a role in the distinction. But I would refrain from defining it as the single important factor behind that. For example, the main source of income for an artist in the past was through commissions, patronage from the wealthy elite - the path was even more fixed then. So for people in the current era like us making art, it is freer much more now.

Wu Chen: Yes, the relationship between money and art is complicated. The fact that in a short time there were so many great masters in Holland, this has something to do with its era as an important naval power. I'm thinking a lot about my own perspective in relation to these questions, often through a hypothetical situation or my

imagination. I hope I can convey these things in a sincere way. Even if at first my method sometimes might appear naive, I work my hardest to depict this naivety as accurate as possible. Take again the work *Untitled (Still-life with a Rabbit)* - from the oysters, pearls, to the gold cross - these elements not only produce a mismatch - from the view of a painter, they emerge out of the palette. Maybe this was what Beuys, covered in gold, was speaking of in his conversation with the dead rabbit. Isn't there this philosophical nonsense that says the moment right now is the best era, but also the worst era. Elaborating on that, I can probably say money is art's best friend, but also forever its enemy.

Liu Ye: That's interesting, I think there's a certain 'serious but irreverent' manner to how you play with the world. But I think this play with the world is very different from my generation. For example, my generation mostly faced the social environment, but for you it's more about deciphering yourself using this dark humor. At a glance, your work appears very casual, but in fact there is a lot of reflection and observation going on before a decision is made. The figure in the painting *Untitled (Still-life with a Rabbit)* is hung upside down. For the work *Bad Man Can Also End Up in Heaven*, the swan is also upside down - is there a connection between these works?

Wu Chen: Although formally wise, they have things in common; I still see them as independent from one another. With *Bad Man Can Also End Up in Heaven* and a painting from *Leda Leda and the Swan* (2013), then there is a recent work *Untitled*

(*Bad Man Can End Up in Heaven No.2*) – there is more of a connection behind these three works.

Liu Ye: I feel the painting from 2013 portrays more a physical desire. How did you go from there to the 2015 *Bad Man Can Also End Up in Heaven*?

Wu Chen: ‘Leda and the Swan’ is a subject beginning with Da Vinci and subsequently developed by countless artists ever since. On the whole, these works have focused on the eroticism and emotions between *Leda and the Swan* - my painting *Leda Leda and the Swan* is a continuation of this expression of lust. During the time of *Bad Man Can Also End Up in Heaven* I was thinking about using painting as a kind of ‘full stop’ to this motif - basically a way to bring a certain closure to this subject matter. On canvas, you see Zeus facing trial – there’s a congregation of different swans positioned like angels from a classical painting. They are all around Zeus, who is the biggest swan being punished. After the painting, I wasn’t completely satisfied. So I began *Untitled (Bad Man Can Also End UP in Heaven No.2)*, which shows Bin Laden holding a swan. It was a hypothesis that Bin Laden might not be as ‘bad’ in comparison to Zeus or at least that Zeus might not be much better. Humanity can be as simple as much as it can be complicated.

Liu Ye: ‘Good person’ or ‘bad person’, depending on the situation, they can become interchangeable. I think an important issue is an ability to recognize or be conscious of one’s evil side. For an artist, we benefit from being able to take something ‘bad’ and allowing that to

manifest on the canvas in how ever way we like.

Wu Chen: I once painted a portrait of Hitler (*Portrait of Anonymous Painter*, 2014), where I painted him as an ordinary painter. If Hitler were able to utilize his wild ambition and dark side into art form, perhaps we would have gained an extra average artist rather than war fanatic. This is just my imagination of course.

Liu Ye: There was also another early painting similar to the large painting with three figures on a blue background. Were these three figures inspired by the painting *The Luncheon on the Grass*?

Wu Chen: Yes, this work was completed in 2016 and titled *Untitled (The Relationship between Male Nude with Male Nude, Male Nude with Female Nude, and Female Nude with Male Nude)*, and then there was another work in 2014 where the title was missing the untitled part. Actually, even earlier was *How to Look at an Abstract Painting*, which also uses the figures from *The Luncheon on the Grass*. The work imagines Manet who is standing from the point of modernism and reacting to a post-modernist abstract painting. The work depicts the two gentlemen and a nude Victorine Meurent, and of their surprise at the subversion of being in a painting composition consisting of geometric lines. For the two works between 2014 and 2016, I tried more to describe a mental interaction between the three models. I was hoping to position myself behind the models to observe the backs of these figures. Maybe the lead male

protagonist liked the lead female protagonist, but the lead female protagonist was in love with the second male, and then maybe the second male was in love more with the lead male protagonist. If you describe the work in 2013 as dressed up like time travel, then the two works in 2016 are closer to a drawn-out melodrama. The 2016 work also inserts a coconut tree into the background, which adds a feeling of incredibility.

Liu Ye: This suddenly brings to mind a word that best encapsulates the relationship between your art and you as a person, ‘Mo Lei Tau’. It’s a kind of irreverent play with the world and describes accurately your type of humor too.

Wu Chen: Why did you think of this particular word?

Liu Ye: This description, the paintings themselves, and also the titles given each work: this is very much like the films of Stephen Chow. You first might think everything is all over the place and illogical, but you never feel there is a lack of reason either. The deeper you enter and the more you begin to understand, and also the more this happens as you play around more. This satire and sense of irony helps you to broach objects and also convey ideas through them. There is a decision behind certain imagery such as the rabbit or swan, which may seem at first to be without any rationale - but they actually suit your paintings very well. There’s also the imagery of coconut trees – it’s the kind of image you would normally have a hard time to fit within a painting. If you do it wrong, everything will easily look

especially tacky. But through your 'Mo Lei Tau' way with things – these elements seem appropriate with plenty of meaning behind them.

Wu Chen: That was pretty amazing what you just said, especially up to the coconut tree. I had a conversation once with artist Xie Nanxing and I don't quite remember how we eventually ended up talking about Cézanne's *The Bathers*. It made me think about that tree in the canvas and how it was used to divide up the composition – and I wonder to myself what kind of tree it was? My first reaction was a coconut tree and unconsciously maybe this is what a land-locked person imagines yearning for the beauty of the ocean.

Liu Ye: Oh, it is a gift to select in a precise way all the objects and subjects for your paintings. It is also where a good artist needs to practice a certain skill of self-cultivation. On the surface, the objects you choose seem to lack logic, but at the same time they make people feel their placement within the composition is also very specific too. This is a particular gift you have in your paintings. The large red painting over there, is that a new work?

Wu Chen: That's right, this is a self-portrait of me (*Portrait About the Male Female Male Figure*, 2016). There is a little connection with a work last year called *The Fountain of Bernini*. This work was about wanting to go through the mirror positioned above and use that to create a mental space.

Liu Ye: For this painting, it makes me think of

Velazquez's *Venus at Her Mirror* (1644–1648). I've discovered what appears to be a common thread in your paintings – all the works have a dialogue with art history. Although your thoughts might appear to jump from place to place, this doesn't mean that there isn't any trace of intention there either.

Wu Chen: Yes, for me as a painter, there is always that relationship present. For many people, the painting by Velazquez also connects with Giorgione's *Sleeping Venus*. Art history for a painter is a little like a dictionary. Its maybe the advantage that a painter has as otherwise, there's no foundation there for us. To make something completely from scratch would be very difficult.

Liu Ye: Do you think this issue applies only to painting? Would you say you are more connected to questions of reality or to painting itself? You could say there are two paths – one path is inspiration from reality, the other inspiration for painting might come from other people, but then on many other levels you can also say it is 'painting about painting' too.

Wu Chen: Uh, actually I always regard the nature of painting with plenty of curiosity. For example, self-portraits by painters, the painter's studio, the tools of a painter, and this also include the models they work with too. This is probably the reason why I choose to work with an easel. When I'm abroad to see museums or exhibitions, even with plenty of moving-image or installations, which of course I might be interested to see and experience – but for me, the thing that gives

me the most satisfaction is still a painting. So my personal interest is situated on that level, I've chosen painting as a means to express my understanding of it.

Liu Ye: I've discovered that your curiosity is very strong. Maybe we could say curiosity and the reflection that followed by that is the driving force pushing you towards this way of approaching painting.

Wu Chen: Personally, I'm the type who likes to work alone for a long stretch of time in the studio. Working in solitude makes it easy to indulge in flights of fancy. Going back to *Portrait About The Male Female Male Figure*, you started to say it made you see a connection with *Venus At Her Mirror*, which is true. Actually the mirror has many important uses in painting. Not only is it about creating three-dimensional space within a two-dimension surface – often the mirror functions to establish a mental space. Like for example, the many mirrors that you find within the paintings of Bacon.

Liu Ye: Is that a deformed figure within the mirror of your painting?

Wu Chen: Sure, the figure in the mirror is a combination of a male and female figure. I also try to give the audience looking at the painting a small test on their sexual orientation. Liu Ye, what did you see when you first saw the work?

Liu Ye: That's a breast right? Then that's the navel?

Wu Chen: Right, so most men when they first see this will see a female form - normally this means that the person is straight. But of course this is just my hypothesis and it doesn't necessarily mean I'm accurate.

Liu Ye: So for me, being a straight person, means that I like femininity?

Wu Chen: Yes.

Liu Ye: Well that's obvious (laughter). Actually if you look at it longer, it starts to look like the genitals of a man, right?

Wu Chen: Right, I used part of a female body and wanted it formally to look a little like a male organ. Isn't there a saying that everyone has a gay gene within him or her? It's just the case that some people have more of this gene than others and I really want to test myself. When I was painting this, I also discovered something amazing too - the setting of this painting is an erotic place. While searching for images on the internet I discovered many of these places have hanging in the rooms reproductions of classical oil paintings: images of the *Holy Mother*, *Holy Child*, the bathing females of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres - the relationship between sex and art is very intimate.

Liu Ye: This is just being human don't you think? Eroticism is an important part of what it means to be human and as a subject matter for art. So from the perspective of a painting, a subject matter is more narrow than wide-ranging. Different relationships can build up from this point, so what

is crucial is the means used to convey things in this day and age, that's what is most interesting for me.

Wu Chen: Most of the time, I think painting is more about conveying things you can understand. Like a critic or scholar using text to describe things, each painting has a rationale or concept. The difference is that I'm accountable only to myself and there's no boundary limit to where I can head towards or associate myself with.

Liu Ye: This is equivalent to how you might work again on something to complete a new work. There are not many themes for a painting. Take a novel for example, a novel really only talks about one subject matter - the story of love between a man and woman. An earlier term in English for the word 'novel' was interchangeable with 'romance' stories. Of course, there are novels afterwards that now do not speak about love. But generally speaking, the most popular classical novels have used different techniques and writers to write about love between a man and a woman. You just have to look at who writes it better or in an interesting way, Just look at *Dream of the Red Chamber*, *Jane Eyre*, *Anna Karenina*...

Wu Chen: It's like someone once said that art history is also a history of sex. In that case you can say the novel is a history of romance (laughter).

Liu Ye: So the theme of painting is not how we imagine it to be. It isn't something that has to be elaborated too much on. I think painting's validity is based on your ability to remember culture,

that's when it becomes effective. The work *The Fountain of Bernini* is really filled with a lot of erotic elements within the painting.

Wu Chen: *The Fountain of Bernini* not only consists of erotic elements. It is also like a murder scene too. I'm hoping for the work to be a mash-up of styles, something similar to Quentin Tarantino's films. There is a Snow White princess from a fairy tale who grows up in reality to be a recently married young woman. The evil Queen bursts into the bedchamber of the married woman who is living in another reality now. A pair of legs in the foreground, allude to another space from the position of an observer looking into the painting. Maybe it's a part of the audience or myself. In short, there's always foreplay before the climax.

Liu Ye: The leg you painted into the canvas is very interesting indeed. In one moment, you take a fairy tale and bring it straight into reality. The leg is like medicine; it's used to enhance absurdity in the painting. Right now there are plenty of artists who have a lot of absurdity in their work - even an abstract painting, a good abstract painting, also can have a lot of absurdity within it. You have painted a work called *Figurative Portrait of Abstract Artist*, which is another work I like very much. In the beginning, I couldn't tell what you were painting. After looking at the title, and then again at the painting, you begin to see the irony and contradiction within the work. The relationship of these two things sharing the same space at the same time is very interesting.

Wu Chen: There is also a painting with Sean Scully. Personally, I'm not so interested in his painting nor do I have much feeling or understanding of abstract painting itself either. I'm more interested in him as a person; maybe because he is Irish. It brings to mind the emblematic talisman and Irish footballer Roy Keane, or the band U2, I've always liked them too. I feel this abstract way of putting colors onto the canvas is like a violent release. If he uses abstraction to convey his feelings, then what I am doing is using a figurative method to express my understanding of his abstract paintings.

Liu Ye: I saw his exhibition in Shanghai. If Mondrian is a classic intellectual abstract artist, then he is also an archetype of a working class abstract painter for me too. He was born into the working class. In his work, there are also elements there that will move people. Abstraction can very easily turn into something graceful or decorative, but his work often has a coarseness to it.

Wu Chen: I also identify with the working class. I'm also interested in the side where he seems uneducated – he's something of a scoundrel too. I remember once in high school, I bought a football magazine introducing the Irish football team, "Obstinate and Unruly, Fearless Against Pressure" – that was their assessment. In the European or World Cup they won only three matches: beating England and Italy in the process. In 2015, I also painted Self-Portrait, which was after my first solo show. I wanted to paint myself as a butcher with a black face, and

where my facial features could feel like abstract male genitalia. It was my way of prompting myself to be more aware in a clear-headed way – and to maintain more courage.

Liu Ye: 'The working class must exercise leadership in everything', this was a sentence I heard all the time when I was young. You seem to always have a habit of painting self-portraits or portraits of artists.

Wu Chen: Right, I'm always interested in artist portraits. Untitled No Surname, in the beginning I had the idea of painting Wang Xingwei's portrait.

Liu Ye: How did the concept come about then?

Wu Chen: The initial idea of the work came from a photograph of Wang Xingwei. In the photograph, he was wearing some work clothes. He was holding a long brush he had made and in another hand there was a large color palette. It looked very much like a knight from a medieval era, wearing armor and ready to stand guard for painting or something like that. I then applied Wang Xingwei's way of working and produced a completed sketch in the beginning. I first used a computer mouse to sketch, but the problem with drawing on a computer is that I have never formally practiced with that before. I felt a lack of feeling with my hand, so I then painted again another line sketch. I eventually arrived at the final painting which became Untitled No Surname.

Liu Ye: Looking at first, it gives me the impression

of a full stop. It is like a painting produced as a kind of punctuation mark. The bosom area resembles the EU currency symbol or maybe a 'V' is in there too. Then the mouth looks like the Chinese character '令' – was this something you intended?

Wu Chen: Haha, that's a very interesting interpretation. When you say it like that, I can see the resemblance there. But I honestly wasn't thinking in that direction. The sign looking like a 'Euro' is part of the armor, the kind from medieval times.

Liu Ye: Do you want to know why I thought of these symbols? I was small and had just started to paint, and in our housing block was an old bus driver who would tell me how painting should look like: the two characters for number 6 could be the eyes, then you would turn around the number 8 horizontally to make a hat, the number 3 was one ear, you turn over 7 and it's a nose. This painting made me think of that.

Wu Chen: My paintings begin with a conjecture, which I use to open up further associations. The departure point for this painting began with my painterly way of conveying things, which then can transform into a relationship with how I imagine connections that bridge a relationship between the idea of being a painter and being conditioned by a particular era. I think to be a painter today is like the character Don Quixote – there's no aim, but at the deepest level there is a certain gusto or a certain conviction there. But maybe this conviction is a joke too and of course this is my

understanding. Actually, I think it's dangerous to use text in order to try and understand a painting. But then again you mentioned this 'Euro' sign, which is interesting too.

Liu Ye: In total, how many artist portraits and 'self-portraits' have you made?

Wu Chen: From 2012, I began to paint about ten or twelve paintings here and there. I normally paint one or two self-portraits a year. Maybe because my Zodiac is Leo, so I can be quite narcissistic. I like to paint these self-portraits. There are plenty of reasons you could say that my paintings are mostly all self-portraits. There are roughly ten portraits of other artists – they work as my understanding and perception towards a few artists from a certain period of time. It follows the changes of my perception towards them, but I might also return to a particularly portrait in order to create another one. The subject matter of an artist portrait is something I will keep persevering with as I hope that through the artists I paint, I can make up a version of art history from myself.

Liu Ye: Everyone has artists they like and don't like. It's always a question from one individual to another individual. Take *Mondrian*, who happens to be an artist I like particularly and who is very important to me. But for you, maybe he's not so important. The artist you might like has a lot to do with how you judge or understand their work, which is the most important factor there. Whose work do you like or are there any artists you consider to be important to you?

Wu Chen: Matisse. For me, he's in the category of an enlightened artist. He's really a painting teacher, because he can teach you so many specific things about painting. For example, how to use color in order to convey things or how he uses line to accentuate a form. I have also painted about Matisse's work *If Matisse Was Born In the US* and there is a ridiculous premise behind it. After Matisse and when you arrive at the things American artists have started to do, then you begin to see a part of his work in theirs too. Every time when I'm not sure what to paint or maybe before I start painting, I like to have a look around at his books.

Liu Ye: I've also discovered another issue to do with the way you paint your own name, which is also very interesting. In your paintings, it seems that the name painted has a more expanded use.

Wu Chen: Right. If the beginning of painting and its conceptualization is the stage of insemination; then the process of painting is the pregnancy; and its completion is the birth of a new life. Then giving the work a name is the same as giving a name to a newborn life. The name is also a way of giving audiences an entrance or passage to read into the work. I like to find ways that can give the name a little more meaning to it. Liu Ye, how do you normally title your work?

Liu Ye: The titles for my work are something quite serious. Each painting is different, so giving the work a title is different every time. That unique way of giving titles suits your 'Mau Lei Tau' style of painting. Some of my paintings have names

only in English without a Chinese translation. For example, there is a small painting where a small girl is holding a pig. The interesting thing was when the painting was auctioned once, they created an entirely new name for it "...and The Pig Princess", which of course, was completely inappropriate.

Wu Chen: "...and The Pig Princess" (laughter). This is far more 'Mau Lei Tau' than me.

Liu Ye: So your art and personal temperament relate to things you do, it also includes your technique and way of giving titles – they all need to be matched up and there is a very skillful way in how they are conveyed together.

Wu Chen: Yes. How to paint will always be at the core of things.

Liu Ye: So you still see painting as an important skill?

Wu Chen: Skill is still important. I think it is a tool to transmit and make concrete your thoughts. However accurate you are depends on your ability to master the skill.

Liu Ye: Whether your skill is good or not, sometimes it signifies whether or not the 'thing' you are trying to convey is appropriate or not. So this is about using judgment as a standard to gauge what is good or bad. This crude painting technique you use is very connected with what you are trying to express. Can you say a little about how you learnt to paint?

Wu Chen: Very early on it was just before I took an exam for senior high school, but I studied only a short time. It was hopeless for me to enroll into art academy and I didn't really want to go back to studies again either. Instead, I got into a painting course at Southwest Jiaotong University. When I was little, I always very much liked painting, and then when I got into primary school, my father found an old man to teach me painting. I remember vividly how this old man could use a pen to draw pictures of horses especially well. When he taught me to paint, I just enjoyed adding things onto these horse paintings like wings or horns. I would give names to the horses such as 'Sea Unicorn Beast'. The old teacher came to teach me a few times, before never coming back again. After that, I simply turned to *Dragon Ball Z* in order to draw different kinds of manga.

Liu Ye: You still seem to have a *Dragon Ball Z* feel as well as 'Mo Lei Tau' too. (Laughter)

Wu Chen: Yes. Akira Toriyama showed me the way to enlightenment (laughter). So I never really went through any rigorous form of training to learn painting. My first lesson in university was with Xie Nanxing. In order to get into a more creative state, the important thing about him was that he would make you forget all the required things you needed to learn before enrolling in exams. From my first year, I began renting a studio with friends to paint. I've always been a little off the track in that way.

Liu Ye: From the time you were little, you painted *Dragon Ball Z* in a 'Mo Lei Tau' manga style. Our generation would look at children's books too,

but mainly in the realist style such as Jimao Xin (*The Letter with Feathers*). Perhaps the most 'Mo Lei Tau' of these was 'Journey to the West' where Monkey King is molded into a soldier fighting against oppression of the feudalist system. For your generation, you see a natural progression from that culture into a 'Mo Lei Tau' style influenced through your exposure to *Dragon Ball Z*.

Wu Chen: I used to also think that way too. But today it does seem very 'Mo Lei Tau' (laughter). Yes, I also think it is very important to convey things sincerely. Liu Ye, I have been thinking about a question recently. It's basically the difficulty of painting: before art history perhaps there was a trajectory from classical to impressionism, arriving afterwards at modernism, and then you get to post-modernism. After post-modernism, you suddenly arrive at a situation where there is a feeling of no end-goal any longer. Almost as if it doesn't matter anymore what you paint - or even if you did paint anything, it would never be good anymore.

Liu Ye: After abstraction, I think on the whole, formal exploration in painting already ended by then and it appears we are into a period of nihilism. This explains why you can paint anything now, you can still feel that whatever you eventually do paint, that it is not quite right either.

Wu Chen: That's an accurate way to put it. Whatever you paint can be ok and what ever you do paint is not quite right either. Before, at a certain time in art history, the most important aspect for an artist was formal experimentation or

to contribute towards how art could be perceived. Looking at today, where do you see the possibility of painting now?

Liu Ye: This issue is too big. I've been thinking a lot about this questions too: painting is something I decided to do and whatever way you look at this, this decision to paint already implicates you into a relationship with history. That's to say, what is important is not only to work at expanding new boundaries, but also how you integrate what has happened before in the past. Painting is not as free as we imagine, it's something with its own set of rules. Moreover, it has a thousand years of history to compare with. So there is a magnitude of rules and this hasn't changed as much as we imagine either. Speaking generally, painting is just a game within a rectangle and it is a very high-level style of game at that.

Wu Chen: Hmm. The more you think you can understand art or painting, the more you feel it is a very difficult game to play with. Painting is also like Chinese chess. After countless games of Chinese chess, the variation of moves is already exhausted now. But also there are fundamental rules to adhere, you can only jump diagonally and it's not a movement you change merely for the sake of being innovative.

Liu Ye: If you change any of these crucial rules, it no longer becomes Chinese chess and transforms into another game entirely. There are certain crucial things that make up painting and these are the things you follow in order to judge what is good or bad. If you try to replace these elements from painting, you end up missing an

essential part of painting. It is very difficult to break away from this – especially as what defines the parameters you work within has only four sides to it.

Wu Chen: Facing painting is like facing a mountain, I feel like I've actually just entered it. I need to find a way to convey in a genuine way all the struggles and torment I have in front of a canvas.

Liu Ye: Painting is the path you have chosen to take. It is something interesting just as much as it is difficult.

Wu Chen: Yes. Hard games are always the ones that are most interesting. The easy to play games are the ones that never last long. I've also been thinking more and more about the title of this exhibition.

Liu Ye: What are your thoughts?

Wu Chen: I want to use the title of the work *Bad Man Can Also End Up in Heaven* for the name of this exhibition.

Liu Ye: I hope that everyone can go to heaven, even the 'bad' people too. It complements the Mo Lei Tau style too.

Wu Chen: (Laughter) 'Bad people' also have a beauty to them too. So let's use this name as the title of the exhibition.

Liu Ye: Sure, I think it suits the exhibition very well indeed.

谢：绘画是不是你生活中唯一的选择，说详细点。

武：其实我是个干啥都没长性的人，但画画还真是个例外。我很幸运的是在高中就有强烈的愿望要当个画家，我家人也不支持也不反对，但我感觉他们希望我知难而退，回到他们为我设计的道路上。到是我的启蒙老师一直很支持我，高二就领这我们班去北京看达利的展览，推荐看贡布里西写的艺术史。我曾还清楚的记得我问我的启蒙老师怎么才能考上美院，老师随便拿个大纸箱，说画满一纸箱他觉得还行的画就行，当然这是不可能的，玩命画一年也就小半箱，当然也没考上美院，但高考成绩挺好的，上西南交大当时对我来说也算个很好的选择，当时我的感觉就是上了大学就不用在学习了，自己想干啥都行，也有特别强烈的愿望早点离开家里。其实我一直觉得我是幸运的，大二我就和几个同学在外面租工作室，大四面临重要的选择的时候我的毕业创作入选了成都双年展的新人特展，这给了我很大的信心，当时入选展览的除了我全是美院的，展览上看自己的作品觉得比着美院的一点不差，心里就更坚定的要当个画家。当然毕业之后的五六年是最艰苦的，生活压力很大，家人好几次都给我找好了工作，我总感觉就这么放弃了太不值得了，那时候就看各种大师的传记，梵高不说了，毕加索二十多岁也穷的不行，当时最喜欢的莫迪里阿尼也穷到去世，那时候经常想画一辈子出不来的多了，我就死磕了。这说的其实还是不够详细，往细里说几万字一点不是问题。现在想想其实生活中还是有太多的选择了，大一就和同学开淘宝店铺买衣服一月也净挣小一千块，当时我们算是第一批跟着马云干的店铺，不是因为画画现在不知道几个皇冠了，大学毕业和同学开考前班，好好干现在估计校长了，大学毕业去家人安排好的工作单位混几年，估计现在最次也是个科长了吧，再不行回郑州原来的高中当个高中老师，估计现在都有好几波考上大学的学生了。但是总感觉这

些事都不够当个画家刺激有成就感，内心还是想当个牛逼的画家。

谢：你毕业与西南交大，那么一个与艺术没关系的地方哪来的土壤让你坚持画画？你有没有一个圈子支撑你的热情呢？

武：还是只能说幸运，我们也常说我们那边是艺术沙漠地带，成都的艺术圈主要在城南我的画室在西北绕城边上，学校又是这么一个理工大学，除了四五个同班同学坚持画画几个老师偶尔去看看外几乎和其他的艺术家没有任何交际，但是艺术就是这么一个神奇的事，可能我刚好需要这段时间独自在一个地方待会。假如刚毕业就去圈子里混很可能就把自己混丢了。孤单英雄最牛逼。

谢：你的绘画特征明显，带有特殊雅气。是闭门造车的结果吗？

武：肯定有关系，我经常觉得我现在的画就是自我教育的结果，闭门造车或是说自己独处能让你更清醒的的了解和认识你自己是怎么回事，认识到自己的特色和长处，剩下的充分表达就好了。

谢：你认为你和当代年轻画家的关联在哪里，特别是你迁往北京之后？

武：其实去北京对我是个重要的决定。到北京黑桥第一感觉就是好多搞艺术的啊，工作室一片一片的，第一天晚上几乎睡不着，凌晨四点多去外面边抽烟边瞎转，看到好多工作室灯都亮着，顿感压力。之后连看了几天的展览，也认识了几个朋友，但感觉我跟他们画的或是做的事情不太一样，我有自己的特点。

谢：你讲讲你的这个展览的结构和感受？

武：这个展览主要是这两三年的作品，以艺术家的肖像和对一些我感兴趣的图示的改造为主，布展时按照女性，男性和同性恋作为划分和布置，有点男女大对拼的意思。展览到没啥特强的感受，就是集中的有看了看自己的作品，没想象中的兴

奋，看到一两年前的画还挺不好意思的。

谢：看完展览你有什么体会，听到什么反响没有？有没有最刺激你的评论？

武：反响好像挺好的，展览开幕三天后我就成都了，好像没啥人在展览上给你刺激的言论，我还挺想听听刺激的言论，就像以前各种先锋艺术刚出现的展览上艺术家批评家会有各种争论，但现在好像风气不是这样的。到是展览完我回郑州我爸看了我的画，生气的说，眼睛没一个画好的，差的远了，别骄傲，回成都继续努力吧啊。哈哈。

谢：你那些东拼西凑的图像有没有方向性，是随手用还是有所指向？

武：我经常在意外的时候获取图像，刚得到一个有可能的图像，有时我会放一段时间想想看，兴趣特大时也会马上动手，但几乎中途都会改变一点或一大点初衷，画的当中我会不断观察画，她会给我新的更有意思的提示，这时我的作品才渐渐有点眉目，我常常觉得我是和画一起在完成一个作品。

谢：有人提到你的色彩问题，你希望画的更炫目呢还是保持个人偏好？

武：我就是想往炫目上靠也靠不上去，一旦违心的时候我会画得很不舒服，感觉哪哪都不对，潘老师提过色彩的问题，你也提过这个问题，我自己感觉我只能不断的改我的画才行，我自己要改到感觉色彩舒服了才行，虽然这样做会丢失一些明快的感觉。

谢：下一步有何打算？

武：下一步和以前差不多吧，努力工作，好好画画，终极目标是争取在绘画语言上有点突破。

谢：看上去你接近成名了，有何展望？

武：其实在最艰难的时候我经常幻想成名，感觉成名多牛逼多牛逼什么的。现在就像赶快回工作室，争取画一批有进步的画。

MAGICIAN SPACE 魔金石空间

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