



A Man's World
皇权世界, 2007

146cm (h) x 130cm (w)
Chinese ink and Color/Acrylic/Mineral Color on Xuan Paper & Ancient Book Paper



A Woman's World
女性世界, 2007

146cm (h) x 130cm (w)
Chinese ink and Color/Acrylic/Mineral Color on Xuan Paper & Ancient Book Paper



INTRODUCTION

Born in 1960s old Beijing and sent to the country to be a worker during the turbulent years of the Cultural Revolution, Liu Yan grew up during a time of immense transformation in her country, witnessing its transition from the Cultural Revolution, to its subsequent economic reforms and growing dominance of capitalism and foreign influences. Maturing amidst the frenzy of burgeoning social and technological advancement, industrialisation, urbanisation and commercialisation, Liu's works often express the double-edged sword of China's new openness to international influences and increasing economic and personal freedoms – in particular, how rapid urbanisation has drowned out traditional Chinese culture.

Melding and reconciling her love for traditional forms such as Peking opera and calligraphy with her love of modern Beijing rock from the hutongs and contemporary culture, Liu's work demonstrates the tensions and ambivalence felt by a native Beijinger who grew up during and after the height of the Cultural Revolution. Her work combines modern Western culture with imagery and icons from traditional Chinese culture, and often addresses contemporary social issues and topics such as the erosion of traditional culture as a result of rapid urbanisation and development. Both celebratory of the freedoms and liberties of modern life in China and mournful of the loss of traditional values and the simplicity of a past era, her works offer a commentary on the jarring discordance of the decadent materialism of modern urban life and its drastic departure from traditional values.

Combining traditional subject matter, materials and techniques of traditional realist Chinese painting with Western representational modes and painting and contemporary images, Liu's works conflate and contrast past and present, tradition and modernity, East and West, and create with these layered cultural references and jarring juxtapositions an unrestrained reflection of China's fraught cultural and sociopolitical history and a nuanced reflection of what modern life means for the Chinese urbanite.

RECENT EXHIBITIONS (2005 TO 2010)

- 2010 *World Beings: Oil Painting Exhibition by 10 Chinese Contemporary Figure Artists*, Gehua Art Center, Beijing
Bare, Naked & Nude, Noel-Baza Fine Art, San Diego, California
Chinese Female Artists Exhibition 2010, Museum of Chinese Women and Children, Beijing
- 2009 *Art Asia – International Asian Contemporary*, Eli Klein Fine Art
Redefining Surrealism, Eli Klein Fine Art, New York
SCOPE Art Fair, New York
Art Chicago, Chicago
- 2008 *In Progress Now Arts Invitational: Let Nanjing Fly*, Nanjing Phoenix Art Museum, Nanjing
Assembling Under the Five Rings, Chinese Contemporary Art Exhibition in the Legend, Beijing
- 2007 *Art Now Fair*, Miami
Six 21st Century Chinese Neo-Pop Artists, ArtSpace / Virginia Miller Galleries, Miami
- 2006 *06 Chinese Contemporary Art Document*, Beijing
Chinese Art Today, National Art Museum of China, Beijing
Her Presence in Colours VII, Daegu Cultural and Arts Center, Taegu, Korea
Impression Beijing: Beijing Women Artists Association, The Capital Museum, Beijing
Chinese Art Today, National Art Museum of China, Beijing
Chinese Contemporary Art Document, The China Millennium Monument, Beijing
- 2005 *The East Artist Exchange*, The National Art Museum of China, Beijing
Solo Exhibition, Art Scene Warehouse, Shanghai
Century of Chinese Character, The China Millennium Monument, Beijing
Dress Up in Art: The Subject of Beijing Opera's Art, Today Gallery, Beijing
Ink Paintings by Urban Ladies, Today Gallery, Beijing
0 Factory Contemporary Art, 0 Factory Gallery, Beijing

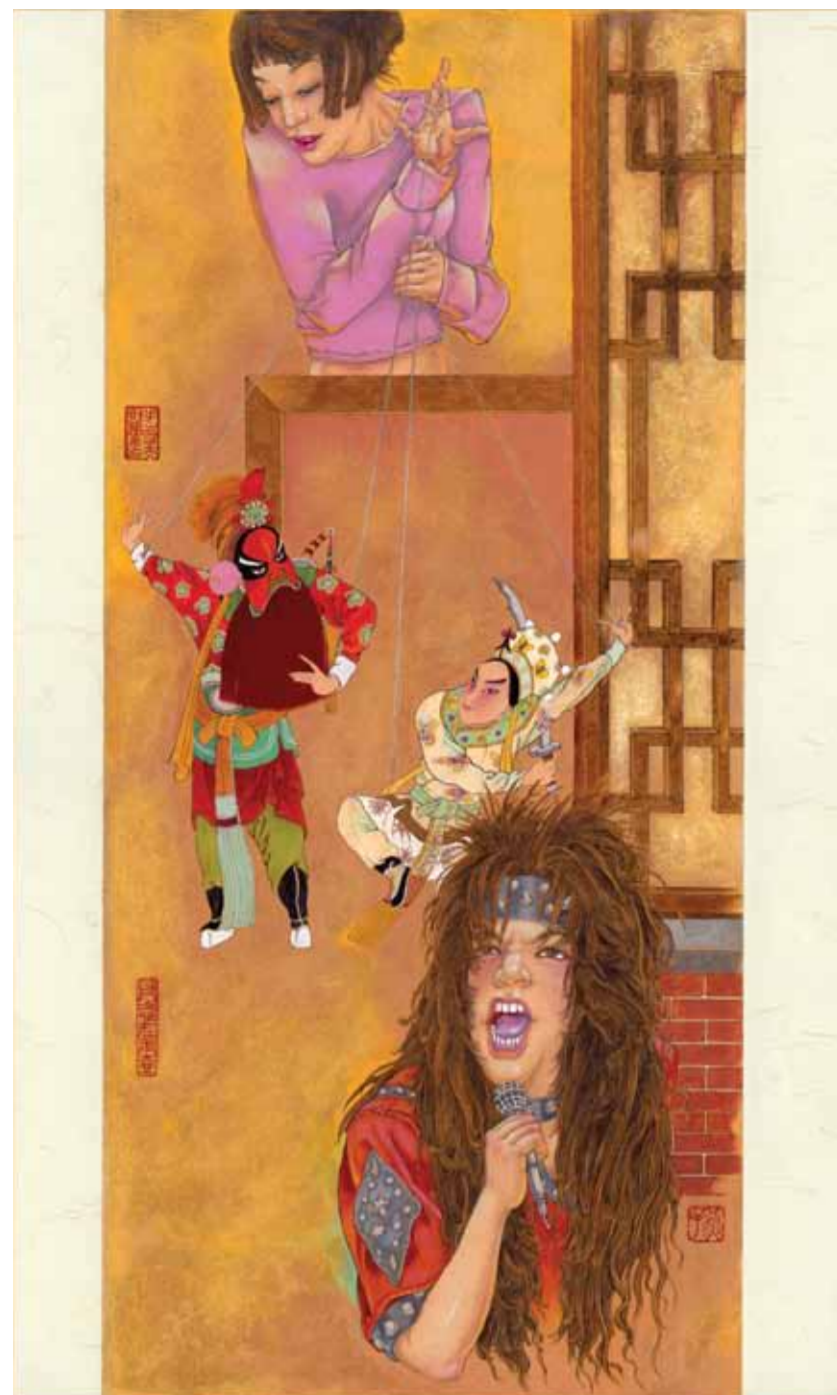
All The World's 人生如戏 A Stage

刘彦 Liu Yan's inaugural solo exhibition in Singapore

Exhibition Period: 14 January – 18 February 2012

Exhibition Opening: 13 January 2012

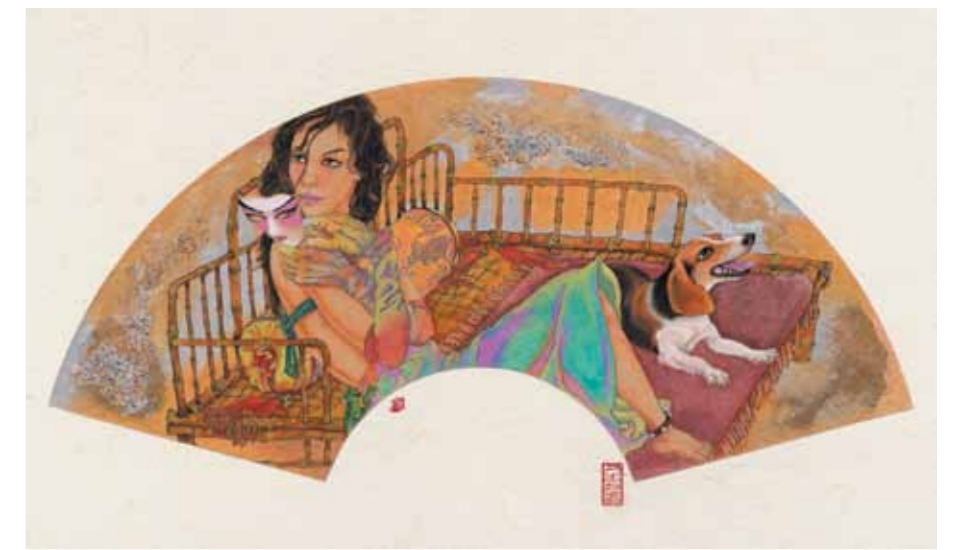
MULAN GALLERY
Contemporary Fine Art



All The World's A Stage
人生如戏, 2011
65cm (h) x 39.5cm (w)
Chinese ink and Color/Acrylic/
Mineral Color on Japanese Gold Foil Card



Contemporary War of the Gods - Death of a Hero
新封神演义, 2009
140cm (h) x 176cm (w)
Acrylic on Canvas



Girl Indoors
宅女的生活, 2011
39.5cm (h) x 65cm (w)
Chinese ink and Color/Acrylic/
Mineral Color on Japanese Gold Foil Card



Don Juan DeMarco in China
当代的唐璜, 2011
48cm (h) x 75cm (w)
Chinese ink and Color/Acrylic/
Mineral Color on Japanese Gold Foil Card



Flower Girls
女人如花, 2011
39.5cm (h) x 65cm (w)
Chinese ink and Color/Acrylic/
Mineral Color on Japanese Gold Foil Card



Child's Play
童年的嬉戏, 2011
65cm (h) x 39.5cm (w)
Chinese ink and Color/Acrylic/
Mineral Color on Japanese Gold Foil Card



A Mirrored Union
镜中姻缘, 2011
39.5cm (h) x 65cm (w)
Chinese ink and Color/Acrylic/Mineral Color on Japanese Gold Foil Card



Immeasurably Vast
天上人间, 2011
50cm (h) x 50cm (w)
Chinese ink and Color/Acrylic/
Mineral Color on Japanese Gold Foil Card



My Sunflowers
我的那片向日葵地, 2011
39.5cm (h) x 65cm (w)
Chinese ink and Color/Acrylic/
Mineral Color on Japanese Gold Foil Card

ARTIST STATEMENT All the world's a stage, and the stage is life. The intrinsic theatricality of life has always been a recurring idea and theme in my work. Using symbols and iconography from Peking opera and drawing from life and memory, this new series of works are an exploration of the dichotomy and overlap between dreams and reality and the duality of dreaming, and are an expression of my anxieties about modernity's spiritual crisis, personal memories and a longing for the natural simplicity of childhood, as well as my loves and sorrows. They are an attempt to condense and sublimate in painting both the sublime and mundane stories of our lives.

According to Ruskin, human history is chronicled through human behaviour, language and art, of which the dramatic and visual arts can be considered to be the most expressive. A highly stylised and constructed form, Chinese opera, like Chinese painting, often reflects a deep appreciation for history, while offering a prism through which to experience reality and savour the manifold aspects of life. Both forms are profoundly capable of expressing the intricacies of the psychology and the artistic impulse. Proper appreciation of Peking opera and its stories of human drama often requires a broad repository of life experience and insights. Similarly, a work of art can also serve as a sign of the times, offering insights into culture, societal changes and everyday life.

Traditional culture and my life experiences form the backbone of my aesthetics and poetics. I had some friends in Peking opera whom I used to photograph backstage. What struck me was that when the curtain fell, so did the traditional, stylised mannerisms, as the fully made-up and costumed actors exit the stage and enter a wholly other scene backstage. Whether the male or female lead, painted face, supporting actor or jester – however well-known a figure in history – each goes about their everyday activities, just like you and me: the righteous, red-faced Guan Gong snacks on a cruller while the treacherous, white-faced Cao Cao drags on a cigarette, and the incomparable royal consort Yang Guifei glugs down a can of cola as the tragic concubine Yu Ji chomps on a hamburger. And as a crossdressing female lead walks leisurely by, I can't help but be disarmed by the beauty and comportment presented by the figure. Amidst this jarring juxtaposition of an opulent tradition and modern present, there's a sense of temporal displacement – time and space compressed. Whoever said that ancient drama and modern society can never meet? To whom I say, isn't there also some kind of postmodern humour in all this?

- Liu Yan
14 Dec 2011

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