

Press Release
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BROOK HSU
Fictions
16.09.2021-01.11.2021

All stories are love stories. All letters are love letters. All creation is a love creation..
-Brook Hsu

Brook Hsu folds time, death, love, and desire into the malachite surfaces and tufts of her paintings. *Fictions* contends with the matter of stories, as they are told and immortalized, ever-shifting and coalescing, calling to question their material existence. As Hsu herself states in an accompanying poem, "Everything is a story; every story is a fiction."

Fictions presents a larger body of portraits by Brook Hsu for the first time. The four portraits in the exhibition portray images of characters from various films by Takeshi Kitano, Hou Hsiao-hsien, and Tsai Ming-liang. For Hsu, these filmic subjects provide a way to *form the formless*. Realism eschewed, faces are soaked in a dense green wash. The portraits are expressly not of the actors, but instead their bodies serve as vessels for capturing a persona by delineating certain gestures and peculiarities. While these consensual subjects lend themselves to be open and porous, already embodying something they are not, they are inevitably bound to their body, their face.

Shellac, made from the resinous secretions of lac beetles, is often used as a varnish for its transparent and protective properties. Hsu uses shellac ink with a liquid approach, letting it pool and soak. Lines form with frail edges as the color bleeds and travels over and bonds with the ground, extending the tenuous figure-ground relation into coiling marks that waver between legibility and obscurity. Her distinctive technique deploys different shapes and means of painted lines - spiral, zigzag or serpentine - rethinking line as an archaic and inherent aesthetic force. Through these calligraphic gestures, Hsu builds and complicates writing, materializing verses that live beyond their textuality.

Two large shag carpets inhabit the wall and floor of the gallery space, with soft impressions of lived-on indentations still visible. Hsu walks across the inked carpets in her studio-her physical way of working with these fibrous textiles comes through in her mode of dripping and staining the pigment into the fluffy pile.

*The lonely white rabbit on the roof is a star
twitching its ears at the rain.**

Both works are populated with rabbits. *Grasshopper's* figures splinter into fragments, with overlapping multiples analogous to Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase, No.2*, wherein movement is captured in a series of sequential snapshots. Noticeably present is a distinct undertaking to contend with the existence of time. A recumbent, reclining female figure faces away from the viewer, parallel to a bounding blue rabbit in *Memory*. One dreams to be the other, or perhaps longs for company.

Hsu's small-scale paintings on lumber punctuate the gallery. The satyr at the center of each painting is being skinned alive. This image can be construed as a climactic polarization—a split between corporeality and spirituality. Echoing the *Flaying of Marsyas* by Titian, the paintings appear to be flayed themselves. Composition is turned inside out and stretched over a horizontal ravine, where the inverted body at the center serves as the medium of our ascent beyond the physical.

text by Christina Gigliotti & Catherine Wang

Brook Hsu's poem, *Fictions*, is available on the gallery website.

Brook Hsu was born 1987 in Pullman, Washington, USA, and currently lives and works in New York. Hsu deploys and weaves the autobiographical and the mythopoetic into paintings using an array of materials, including ink, oil paint, industrial carpets, and off-cuts of ready-made lumber. The sources for Hsu's imagery comes from her own observations, sometimes arising from art history, film and literature. Her practice as painter is based in representation and questions current definitions of figuration and abstraction.

Taiwanese-American artist Brook Hsu grew up in Oklahoma, received her BFA from the Kansas City Art Institute in 2010 and her MFA from Yale University in 2016. Recent solo exhibitions by Hsu have taken place at Manual Arts, Los Angeles, USA (2021, solo); Et al., San Francisco (2019, solo); Bortolami Gallery, New York (2019, solo); Bahamas Biennale, Detroit (2018, solo). Group exhibitions with the artist have taken place at: TANK, Shanghai (2020); CLEARING, New York (2020); Jan Kaps, Cologne (2020); The Renaissance Society, Chicago (2018-2019).

* Denise Levertov, *Come into Animal Presence*, 1960



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