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My wandering art in America

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Abstract

The wandering life of a Christian artist from China travelling to the United States and creating art that challenges the Chinese Communist Party, choosing to pursue freedom and reacting against the politics and oppression of various institutional forces.

MY WANDERING ART IN AMERICA

by

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BFA. S.C.F.A.I. Sculpture Program 2010

Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
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As a fine art student at Syracuse University, I feel I have wandered physically, artistically and intellectually for the past three years. Travelling from China to the United States to gain freedom to discuss religious and political perspectives which are banned in China. In this process, I continue to learn, to attempt to know myself, my identity, what is truly me outside of the reality of Communism. I attempt to maintain the voice of the lower class, the religiously oppressed in China, and use my soul to sing to the world.

Singing, computer generated images, and large scale paintings I create resemble the graffiti I have seen through wandering more than it resembles contemporary modes of artmaking. Using readily available materials and readily recognizable imagery, the aim of this work is to create in a manner more closely to daily life and to have that work be more accessible to my audience.

Primarily taking the form of large graffiti like anti-propaganda paintings, that attempt to counter the official propaganda of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), I paint very quickly while spending the majority of my time developing content. Utilizing imagery from pop culture, global news, international events, famous movies and cartoons I am attempting to create an access point into the work for both Eastern and Western audiences. Taking pop culture iconography such as Winnie the Pooh, the T-800 Robot from the Terminator Movies as well as President Donald Trump and using it symbolically, I attempt to create a coded or veiled language that reacts to and hides its meaning from the watchful eye of the Chinese Government.

Painting on large flat canvases which I then repurpose and reuse, I see these as functional

paintings. Due to the fact that my real life is in a state of perpetual travel, it is important to me that the paintings act as a tapestry which can be rolled up for easy transport. The images become distorted after everyday wear from life. Dust, coffee stains, an accidental fall, even the exposed to the sun changes the work. I totally accept every accident and change to the work. Just as in life, you don't know what you will get all the time and the element of chance, is important to understanding this work.

As I have continued to wander, I have continued to create work that has a direct relationship to my religious beliefs drawing parallels between its narratives and contemporary Chinese politics. Drawing on the teachings of the Eastern Lightning Church, I link Satan in his reptilian form to the traditional Chinese symbol of the Red Dragon and through my work I attempt to metaphorically represent how the Regime of the Red Dragon has taken over the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Melding religious belief with contemporary Chinese politics this work realizes a coming judgement day within Chinese politics where mankind faces a new era.

2. Inheritance and Evolution

I was born into a family of artists. My father is a landscape painter and architect and my mother is a painting teacher. Growing up in this atmosphere, naturally influenced me to make art. My parents have also been members of the East Lighting Church since 2008. Through them I had access to the Bible, which inspired me to use these teachings as the basis for my work. Since my parents were involved in art before I was born, I see myself as a continuation of their lives, continuing their pursuit or destiny. I question whether I was chosen to take on this responsibility, but I in the end I really love art. I HAOTIAN, must make art, be an artist, or exist as an art worker.

As members of the Eastern Lightning Church, we believe that Christ has come to the world in the body of a Chinese woman who will complete the work of the coming kingdom's time. God has published "myths", manifestations of the words in the flesh, of his coming judgement. To temper his followers, disciples have been sent to save men from the catastrophe of the last days. God will choose a group of people, glorify his name, and destroy the evil. We believe that God's work is still ongoing and that more people will come to know about God's second incarnation in this world. From China to every corner of the world, there are no organizations or powers that can block her influence.

It is important to know that followers of the Eastern Lightning Church have been persecuted in China, reading its teachings is unsafe, and basing ones art on its beliefs puts one in peril, and so I wander and attempt to conceal belief and meaning with my work.

Living in China I am constantly hiding from and observing the world around me. Sometimes I have thought that before I die, I hope that I can leave a lot of things and give comfort to others. In China I do not always feel that I am able to speak with people, especially living under an oppressive communist government. At this moment I cannot arbitrarily reveal my beliefs or perspectives. This is why I use my art as a metaphor for what I believe. Unfortunately, I feel I will have to stay hidden and my painting will need to maintain euphemistic elements using public and international events as a means to communicate.

As a result, art has become my only escape. In all aspects, painting is my only complete way of control. No matter what the situation or time, I can use painting to realize my own ideas and achieve a form of art that speaks for me and speaks for itself, going beyond language. Using art as my language, I hope to provide insight into what is most important to me and also provide and offering to the world. I also use my art in some extent to understand world. As a person I need this expression.

This passion for art brought me to study in America and I quickly came to understand that I was taught to create work in an entirely different manner. Chinese artists and educators viewing art as a

natural intuitive process and so it was difficult to transition between that thought process and the expectation that the art needed to be completely thought out. This conceptual approach that I have learned in America has made me more confident about my current situation by giving me purpose but I feel as though I am in limbo between my Eastern roots and my western experience which has influenced my aesthetic and content.

There are many differences between my art and traditional Chinese art. In traditional Chinese painting, the form of the picture is very important. The traditional compositions tend to lead the eye from the top of the piece to the bottom and then from right to left in order to end in the middle. Symmetry is typically very important. The pattern within the work represents different meanings. In my painting, although I am using the traditional composition in order to lead the eye, I do not use traditional Chinese aesthetics or concepts. My work has a very different process in terms of creating and viewing. When I create a painting, I go one of two ways. I typically plan out the form beforehand to represent a specific concept that I have in mind, I also use an intuitive expression to connect the emotion in the piece. I do not think that my work is any more or less valuable than traditional Chinese art. I think it is in a separate category with its own unique relevance.

In future work, I will continue to pursue the themes of God, fate, life and death. These are human themes which have always existed in history, within the field of literature and within art in contemporary society. I choose to pursue these ideas because most people do not think about them on a day to day basis. We are used to our current existence and it is obviously impossible to completely block outside information. People do not often question what the outside world is like outside their own bubble. How do we move forward? Most of us are used to living a life of numbness, and I am trapped in that life too. A condition made only worse by technology, a world where we cannot live without smartphones and computers daily life. A lot of human research, science, and knowledge is focused on data mining, and

instant gratification, distraction, and sexual desires.

The more people become reliant on technology the more obedient they are to those in power. We now worship science and technology, which is as oppressive as governments. Yet, I still believe that hope always exists. It exists between our breaths. It exists in every moment that we are alive. The best way that I can describe it is by how I feel when I pick up a pen and create art. I can feel life flow through me onto the canvas. Being able to make art gives me a sense of calm and control over a world that is in constant chaos. My hope comes from the inside and I bring it into this world with my work.

3. Symbol, Material, Texture, and Performance (Conclusion)

Before I came to United States, I attempted to be a “normal” person so that no one would notice that I had different thoughts than the accepted views of a socialist society. In public spaces within China, especially in school I maintained the status of a “good” student from middle school through college always in fear that others might notice my real thoughts “I want to escape the world of socialism, I want to rebel” and in those years I discovered that art is both escape and tool. Yet even in that time the work remained very hidden and concealed using paint, graffiti and installation, constructing large cityscapes to create an “entire” contained world. But upon my arrival, the work has expanded becoming more immersive incorporating symbols, found materials, texture, and performance.

Taking the form of Anti-Propaganda against the Propaganda of the Chinese Government, these works are described below.

4. Works

1. ROLE AND SUBSTANCE

Size: 6' x 12'ft

Year: 2017-2018

Material: canvas, paint, spray paint, oil paint

This is a work done in 2017 after the 19th Communist Party of China National Congress. In the Eastern Lightning Church, the Chinese are the most corrupt people in all the nations of the world, because they are thoroughly atheists or worshipped many gods and false gods, and because this last-generation Christ was born in this China. This place is to begin the trial of the end of the world.

The hero in the picture is a cartoon image after being demonized - Winnie the Pooh. In 2018, "Winnie the Pooh" is a joke that is banned in China. Many people think that the image of Winnie the Pooh and the highest leader of China, Xi Jinping, are very similar. It is ridiculous that the government officially banned such speech. This is also what I use. The reason for this joke. The background of this picture is the Great Hall of the People in China. It was the situation of the CCP's top leader during the re-election of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2018. The guy who looked like a demon happily removed his clothes and revealed himself. The imprint in the body, five inverted five-pointed stars, also reflects the Chinese flag under the Chinese Communist Party and is the symbol of the devil, this person who plays the role of the Chairman of China, its essence is the devil. This picture is a response I created after Xi Jinping was re-elected.

From the perspective of painting itself, this painting is more like a combination of traditional painting and character graffiti, but in the perspective of the picture and the human body structure, I deliberately weaken the three-dimensional visual experience, in order to highlight the protagonist itself. Symbol - an ugly Winnie the Pooh. From the visual perception of the screen object, I borrowed from the expression of Chinese traditional calligraphy and painting, that is, the written spirit of the object to

express the inner spirit and character of the object, while the painting itself does not use too much color to weaken the subject. Rather than using Western traditional realistic painting techniques, it only focuses on the representation of the structure of the character or the perspective of the environmental space, the lack of the character of the painting object itself and the character of the author.

I didn't use the original version of Winnie the Pooh, not only to avoid infringement of the original, but also because I want the character on this picture to be more like the Chinese leader of 2018, Xi Jinping, so the protagonist of this painting only has the same color as Winnie the Pooh, and the character is only roughly similar to the original.

2. RETRIBUTION

Size: 6' x 12' ft

Year: 2017-2018

Material: canvas, paint, spray paint, oil paint

This is a fictional story.

In the last period of the Chinese Communist Party, which was not calm, a major event happened, but perhaps at this time everyone did not feel it. Everyone knows that the Communist Party is finished. It was a midnight Beijing, and there was a heavy rain under the clouded sky. The alarm of the famous hero's memorial hall next to Tiananmen Square sounded from the room where Mao Ze Dong's crystal coffin was placed. The guards rushed to this dark space and found the crystal. The coffin has been opened, Mao Ze Dong's head has been cut off, and everyone is puzzled. At this moment, some people heard that the guns outside the memorial hall continued to sound like a violent conflict in the square. The people in the memorial carefully walked outside. I saw a lot of police and troops fighting in the square. One of the policemen was very tall, at least two meters tall. He wore an American ice hockey mask, dressed in a city uniform, and held a machete in his right hand. His left hand was clenched. Holding Mao Ze Dong's head, he looked calm and angry, as if the head of the fallen emperor declared the demise of the Communist

dynasty!

I borrowed the killer Jason from the American horror movie "Friday the Thirteenth". For most Americans, he was a killer, an angry and horrible executioner, and I wrote in Chinese on the clothes he wore Guan Guan. This is the meaning of urban management. For the Chinese, the urban management is a lively Jason, and he is worse than Jason, because they are social parasites that specialize in suppressing civilians, but in China, urban management is not a person, there are many people, they have organization, weapons, government minions, and this city management has personally cut the head of the Chinese leader! Also, the subject of this painting, retribution.

At the same time, the Eastern Lightning Church mentioned that God will use all things to work for him and mobilize everything to serve him. This person who directly cuts Mao Ze Dong's head is the concrete embodiment of God's mobilization. It can be likened to The United States in the Sino-US trade war destroyed the Communist Party's rule and destroyed the Red Dragon regime: at the same time, in order to highlight the effect of this cut and be cut, in this virtual Chinese incident, the image of the killer used the role of the United States. The reversal of East and West culture gives the audience a strong sense of contrast; at the same time, the world is gradually moving towards globalization. I use Chinese and American cultural symbols to express it in order to increase the readability of paintings for more audiences.

3. FUNERAL WREATHS

Size: 2 x 3 ft each

Year: 2016-2018

Material: cardboard, acrylic paint

Wreath is a sacrifice in Chinese culture that appears at the funeral. The living person's memorial to the dead is used for burning after the funeral. People believe that incineration can bring this world of things to another world.

Wreaths are often made of colored paper, and the colored wreaths transform the dignified atmosphere of the funeral into wishing the deceased to be calm and happy in another world.

I obviously changed the traditional wreaths. They are no longer simple flower styles. I made wreaths from the heads of successive leaders since the Chinese Communist Party took office, and wrote their policies on their faces when they were in power or Slogans or their crimes. Although they have not passed away, I think I just brought them death greetings in a simple way.

4.ASSIMILATION
Size; 12 x 9 ft each
Year: 2018 summer
Material: canvas, paint

This two-piece work has two meanings.

a. The two energies or objects in the game will become more and more similar to each other. They will not have a real winner regardless of their regional superiority or disadvantage. They will be more like a new substance produced by fusion.

The economic game between China and the United States will not have a real winner. Instead, the two countries are more and more aware of each other and they are rubbing and contesting each other in the game. The two are assimilated and close to each other, in a huge A new international situation is formed in the game.

b. Among the contents of the Church of the Eastern Lightning, there is something about the end of the world. The end of Christ said that the nations of the world will end in disasters and wars. Only the Kingdom of God is established, and all who believe in God gather together to spend the rest of the time and enter a new era after God's 6000-year-old creation plan.

Therefore, the cross appearing in the two pictures represents the disaster faced by mankind and represents the judgment that Christ will carry out in the last days. The two huge pictures are filled with a lot of red and yellow and countless cutting marks. The texture of these pictures the effect is the nature of righteousness and wrath at the time of mapping Christ's judgment, inviolable, unshakable!

5.SCYTHE AXE GANG

Size; 12 x 9 ft

Year: 2018 summer

Material: canvas, paint

This painting is an ironic expression.

The party flag of the Communist Party of China was changed to a skeleton and an axe. During my time when I returned to China, I often chatted with ordinary people in Chinese society. They existed at every level of society. I was chatting with a taxi driver this time. In my chat with him, he mentioned as a child's growth experience, the young people of the 1970s and 1980s called the Communist Party a sickle axe. The Communist Party's party flag is a sickle and a hammer, symbolizing the peasant and the working class. When the sickle and axe are together, it gives people a feeling of slaughter and violence. One of the most famous triad names in China is the 'Axe Gang'. I think this is the reason why the young people of the 70s and 80s called the Communist Party so much, the 'sickle axe help' came from this!

This painting does not depict other things in its performance. It only gives the appearance when the sickle and the axe are combined, and its presentation is like the expression of Chinese calligraphy painting. The performance of calligraphy painting strengthens me. The identity (I am from China, is a real, young people living in China), in my innovative style, there is also a continuation of traditional Chinese painting.

Calligraphy usually only works in monochrome (many times black), and I use the

yellow to write on the red cloth when I create this painting.

The feeling I conveyed in the artistic conception of this picture is strong and angry. I have no scruples about whether to control the whole picture in a cautious state when using a yellow brush, but to show me more when I paint, my emotions and state, or my ideal mood or state, if I need extreme majesty and anger, I will carry this kind of emotion and the logic of creating this emotion, use the body to carry out operation and expression are like fighting in a battle.

6. ENDING CYBER

Size: 5 x 10ft

Year: 2019 February-March

Material: canvas, paint

In the movie 'Terminator', we know T-800 is the robot killer for killing people from cyber world, our human world get ruled by robots. In this painting, I just add one more thing from contemporary world, which is I painted the robot T-800 looks like made by HUAWEI-China mobile phone company, this painting is marking USA and China trade war, I also use this painting to remind people that we win the end of the world, just we are in the ending time, the world are changing!

7. REINCARNATION

Size: 5 x 10ft

Year: 2019 February-March

Material: canvas, paint

For me, a Chinese, Karl Marx is from Western world and from white people society. For Western world, especially for white capitalism and Christian, he is enemy, because he is a Robber and Satanic. Karl Marx influences china very deeply!

Today China still is a socialist society, of course, the government in China still wants us to keep following KARL MARX and other big Communist Party members, our government have trade war with USA now, with the biggest white capitalism world, but we are Asian, we have Chinese traditional culture, Communist through and culture Western white world, not us, I hate communist too, but I just want remind white people - Karl Max is white! When socialism from CHINA vs. capitalism from AMERICA, it just looks like White vs. White.

8. CHAOS WINNER

Size: 5 x 10ft

Year: 2019

Material: canvas, paint

This ideal is come from iPhone emoji-🤪, I just change 3 '\$' to 1'\$' , 1'¥' and 1'?' .

We don't know in the trade war who will win, but I know It is a game for government but Chaos world for people. I don't support any one.

15

ENDING STAR

Size: 5 x 10ft

Year: 2019 February-March

Material: canvas, paint

In my religion we are in the end of the world now, it is a period of time that everything is changing and New World is coming. In the end of the world there is a lot of famous people that everybody knows, I chose Donald Trump, I draw him like a ROCK STAR, because he really could represent a superstar and a son of doomsday by his position and behavior in the end of the world!

FLAME ANGEL
Dimensions Variable
YEAR: 2018-2019
Performance

Flame Angel is a song I wrote performed in numerous venues throughout Syracuse.

While singing this song I saw a huge number of angels standing upright in the air. When they appeared, they stood together with the rolling golden and red clouds. The guards are on both sides of the left and right and they are huge. I can only look up to the angels in the clouds and stand in front of them. From the sky to the nine layers of heaven, countless lights come in all directions and there is a huge gate behind them. The door just start to open, infinite golden light come from the huge door inside to everywhere, the light is so strong, strong like some energy that you can touch. but I couldn't see what was in the door because it was too bright, but the light did not stab my eyes.

Behind the door, I don't know if it is the king who is coming? This 'illusion' sounds like the ancient story, it came to my mind with the song, and it just looks not like something too old or too far from the future, and it is not limited by time and space.

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