

## Dreams of Desire

An interview with artist Fu Lei

Fu Lei is a veteran of the famous 798 Art Zone in Beijing, where his was one of the first few studios established in the district. He is known for his vibrant and colourful oil paintings in classical style, which capture the notion of excess in today's world. Plump figures decorated in pearls and dainty high-heels frolic amongst toads, flamingos, snails and fruit in an absurd yet uncannily familiar world.

*Vanessa Lim: Your work presents the bodies of your human subjects in very unusual and twisted positions, but rarely reveals their faces. Why have you chosen to avoid revealing the face? Does this suggest that faces are not relevant in the composition?*

Fu Lei: I have been avoiding subjects' faces since I started my pencil sketches in 2008. In a way, I wanted to place more emphasis on body gestures of these subjects and to create uniformity between the bodies and items surrounding it. I feel that the body gestures of humans are also a form of expression. In fact, this form of expression may possess a greater capacity for imagination. The portrayal of faces and thus facial expression, in my opinion, is too much of a directed and restricted way of viewing the work. (...)

*VL: You have left your human subjects either naked or only barely clothed in socks and shoes. How is the lack of clothing connected to the theme of excess?*

FL: All objects in my work, such as an apple, an animal or a plant, are not clothed. I see humans in my work to be equal with these objects and choose not to dress them. The desire for clothes will reflect the universal desire by all objects involved, not just the human figures.

*VL: Additionally, there appears to be a hint of femininity in the use of high heels and pearls. How do these props (or costumes?) contribute to theme of lust and excess?*

FL: The emphasis placed on the recurring idea of "universal desire" suggests the theme of "lust". "Lust" here does not solely refer to the relationship between genders. The use of high heels and pearls addresses capitalism, and more importantly, it conceals the sexual identity of the subjects. It is narrow-minded to assume the desires of men or women are solely based on their gender. (...)



FU Lei. 天堂11号 (Paradise No. 11), 2014, Oil on canvas, 180 x 180 cm, Courtesy of Art Plural Gallery

*VL: You once explained that "the way of expression in art should be decided by the artist's sincerity rather than the market". How did you come to this conclusion? Were there significant experiences/ events that led you to criticize the economic driven society of today?*

FL: I have always felt that the positive attitudes of an artist can create quality art. Sincerity also plays an important role. This is a conclusion which I have arrived at through the study of art history. In today's society, capitalism looms over our daily activities. We lose ourselves in the process of seeking ways to satisfy our unending desire for monetary interests. We lose the intrinsic value of "honesty" within us, and the ability to value things on a spiritual level. However, the art market is important in helping me maintain a conducive and sustainable working condition. Hence, I do not completely reject the market but choose to reject the obsession for material wants which the market enables.

Excerpt of an interview with Fu Lei by Vanessa Lim

Exhibition:	Dreams of Desire
Dates:	Till 30 December 2014
Venue:	Art Plural Gallery, 38 Armenian Street
Web:	www.artpluralgallery.com