

Owen Fu:

心兽 宿于 空虚

The Geisttiere Dwell in the Void

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Owen Fu 不太在意绘画体验中那个“决定性的时刻”。他就像《Panic》(2020) 中那名夹着香烟的托腮男人，常常并不知道要将目光落在周遭何处——但在画作的晦暗底色中，藏着像被切开的鸭梨一样的日光灯，一些表情介于亲切与荒疏之间的孩童，以及主人公的暗红色外套下露出讥诮神情的脸。某种程度上说，带有拟人元素的形象是 Owen Fu 绘画中的“情绪动物”或“心兽”，它们并非一早就排好队等待着被绘画和被观看，而是潜藏在大把对艺术家与观者而言都并非异质的时间里，一如徘徊在日暮时分丢失了主人的影子。当然，与它们的交谈甚至亲密也是可能的：如果你也恰好足够空虚。

在与这些心兽的相处中，Owen Fu 以形形色色的线条作为私语或交谈的句法。在 Owen Fu 的小尺幅绘画中，一盏台灯、一个花瓶、一把茶壶会在炭笔线条下变成某种安谧或狡黠的化身——这些线条从造型角度而言无意构筑任何具象之物，但情感的质变恰巧发生于“无目的”与“非准确”之中：画家以试水的心态抛出飞钓之线，那些被绘画的对象是先跃出记忆或心智的水面，才落在在画布之上的。这些上钩的“愿者”，亦是艺术家真实生活中的种种局部。而语言总是有限：经过时间的积淀与流淌，有些经历和反应变得模糊，有些差错出现在画面的时候刚好成为情感的另一重解，从而对艺术家原初的情感体验作了推进。时间会说谎，但也保留相对的真实，即某一情感体验的重要性。因而，Owen Fu 的绘画并不依托于严苛的记忆或精纯的思虑；他用想象和情绪（即兴的，或反复排演的）推进形态和场景，这些思绪的涌动则勾勒出画面基本的戏剧空间。

惯于从形象来解读画面的观者会自然地倾向于认为 Owen Fu 的绘画呈现了一些可爱事物：精灵，玩偶，或是“被安排了一张脸或一具身体”的诸物——从画面中的日用物，到未可名状的几何体块，甚至是真实的椅子（Robin's Chair, 2020）。但在形象的背后，心兽没有面貌。与对时间和其中种种微细之物的感知方式同出一辙的是，画家对某一形象的呈现或许仅仅是抽象骨架的随手组合——不是一张脸，而是两个点和一条漂浮的曲线；不是一把椅子，而是形成特定搭建关系的数根短线。“形象”则脱胎于观者和画作之间的对望，有时，它们被观者的心兽牵引而出。这或许是什么，用“可爱”去概括 Owen Fu 的绘画是失当的：如果你只看到被花朵包围的螃蟹，那只似乎噙着泪水的碗就不必存在 [Shanghai Crab (Table Disarmed), 2020]；如



Owen Fu, 《Panic》, 2020 年,
布面油画, 152.4 × 213.4 厘米
图片致谢艺术家及 O townhouse
(洛杉矶)

Owen Fu, *Panic*, 2020,
oil on canvas, 152.4 × 213.4 cm
Courtesy the artist and
O townhouse, Los Angeles

果那个偷偷掀开了帘幕的黑色小怪物满怀着纯粹的天真好奇，那么红色幕布上正在歪倒和坠落的人形就与即将触碰到它们的手指无关（Late Night Boogie, 2022）。对 Owen Fu 而言，绘画的行动时常随心绪而辗转，甚或是平复或分析某一心绪的手段（treatment）。持续修改或许始于闪念的一幅作品变成艺术家寻找内心平衡的练习，在画作运出工作室之前，它仍可能被添上一串蓝色的、神情模糊的“珠链”（Flowers for Algernon, 2022）。

在伴随着绘画的短小写作中，Owen Fu 说：“不。”短诗 *No Story* 可被视作是艺术家关于其创作核心的自陈——不是（不要）这样的身体；不是（不要）这样的坦白。不是（不要）让爱和信任的人知晓一些秘密，但我也不要把这些“不”说出来。

在自青少年时代起漫长的独自生活中，Owen Fu 复习着掠过脑海的一些记忆与幻想，以及亲人与朋友的絮语——比如母亲告诉他“要减肥”，父亲则说“要快乐”。最终 Owen Fu 写道，如果爱是个问题，那么我无法回答它。Owen Fu 的心兽也说“不”。这些姑且可归纳至拒绝与回敛的立场被转译为 Owen Fu 画作中那些难与任何一种现实兼容的倔强与怪诞，成为被一团深灰色脸孔包裹着的苍白侧影，在目光可及的两端，两张脸孔都耷下嘴角，扭过头去（Remains of the Day, 2022）。但在另一些画作中，这些小兽又幻化为乖觉的、奉献的、欲求着的存在，它们或手持花束在疑似散场后的舞台上诡秘地暗笑（A Curtain Call, 2022），或坐在秋千上小心翼翼地对着月亮伸出手去想偷得片刻光芒（Voleur de lune, 2021）；它们还会在某些难得的温情时刻回到一个暖色调的怀抱当中，仅仅保持着警惕的张望 [Untitled (Summer Thing), 2021]。

Owen Fu 从某种意义上讲也是一个张望的人。作品《Stealing Beauty》（2021）是他的社交媒体头像——画作中，白色窗帘后是一张被绛红头巾围裹的青涩面庞，一双不谙世事又似洞悉世事的双眼望向外面的世界。画面中其他的一切围绕着这双眼睛展开，而观者会在探询画中人所见之物时感到迷失。一些事情发生了太久。时间在张望中变成孤独，而拒斥的感觉被孤独冲淡。Owen Fu 2021 年在天线空间的个展“美丽而不自知”隐现着艺术家在时间背后的怅望，在这批已经拥有成熟视觉语言的画作中，他知晓如何用自己的悲伤和欲求去演绎一些“灰色幽默”——它们似在尝试压低情绪的强度。与一批在画面处理上保留了凌乱、粗犷笔触的前作（One hundred ways to say “love you”, 2018; I Light Myself, 2020; Hands, 2020; etc.）稍有不同，这批作品中的线条时而被弱化为色域之间糅合的边界 [Untitled (turn it on); Untitled (turn it off), 2022]。显得更为宁静温淡的画面或也来自于艺术家对心境的更多自持。

如果从纯粹观看的角度出发，Owen Fu 的画作中有太多的“洞”。或也可以说，一切线条和色彩都是这些洞的附庸——围绕着洞，艺术家生产欲望，消化欲望，偶尔通过笔触和色彩的调度展现都会气质或旷野之息。但无论描绘的对象如何，这些绘画绝非开朗和明快的：洞始终是无法填充的空虚，是一种时间的临期形态，也是张望着世界上同样寂寞事物的双眼和一张无声叫喊的嘴巴。那些偶然成为具象的场景或形象，是艺术家在空虚的寄宿中从自身掀开的一角，它们包含着曾经真实的喜怒哀乐，成为 Owen Fu 心兽的踱步与游乐之所。恰巧，只是恰巧：这些画作让更为广阔的共感图景在另一些来自他者的失意或欢愉中浮出，也让 *No Story* 中的 Owen Fu 与他秘密的朋友拥有了片刻相撞的眼神。



Owen Fu, 《The Remains of the Day》, 2022 年, 布面油画, 116.8 × 152.4 厘米
图片致谢艺术家及天线空间（上海）

Owen Fu, *The Remains of the Day*, 2022, oil on linen, 116.8 × 152.4 cm
Courtesy the artist and Antenna Space, Shanghai



Owen Fu, 《Untitled (Summer Thing)》, 2021 年, 布面油画, 106.7 × 152.4 厘米
图片致谢艺术家及天线空间（上海）

Owen Fu, *Untitled (Summer Thing)*, 2021, oil on linen, 106.7 × 152.4 cm
Courtesy the artist and Antenna Space, Shanghai



Owen Fu, 《A Curtain Call》, 2022 年, 布面油画, 55.9 × 71.1 厘米
图片致谢艺术家及天线空间（上海）

Owen Fu, *A Curtain Call*, 2022, oil on canvas, 55.9 × 71.1 cm
Courtesy the artist and Antenna Space, Shanghai

Owen Fu doesn't really concern himself with the "decisive moment" in experiencing painting. He's like the chin-propping man with a cigarette in *Panic* (2020), his gaze hovering over the surroundings without knowing where to land—despite the many things that hide amongst the sombre shades of the painting's background: pendant lights that resemble sliced-open pears and a few children with expressions teetering between intimacy and estrangement; not to mention the cynical face peering out from within the protagonist's burgundy coat. To some extent, these personified figural elements of Fu's paintings are "creatures that sprung from feelings" or, simply, "*geisttiere* (mind/spirit-animals)." They never wait in lines to be painted and seen; instead, they conceal themselves within a temporality that manifests no distinctions between the artist and the viewers, wandering like crepuscular shadows that just got separated from their owners. Of course, it is still possible to converse with them or even caress them—if you also happen to be doleful enough.

When mingling with these *geisttiere*, Owen Fu employs varied linework as a vocabulary for chitchats. In his small-size paintings, a lamp, a vase, or a tea-pot could become animated by charcoal lines and metamorphize into amicable or cunning avatars. These lines carry no intention to reify anything into concrete figures, yet it is within their "aimlessness" and "inaccuracies" that the transmutations of emotions take place: the painter casts the line with no particular aim, and his subjects willingly leap out of his memories and psyche to land onto the canvas. These "voluntary catches" are fragments of the artist's genuine lived experience. Language is always inadequate: the passing and accumulation of time blur certain experiences and reactions, but as the imprecisions manifest in the painting, they also create space for reinterpretations and evolve the artist's initial feelings. Time lies, but it also preserves relative truths, namely the perceived significance of a particular emotional experience. Therefore, Fu's paintings rely on neither detailed recollections nor high-minded contemplations; Instead, he develops forms and scenarios from imaginations and (improvised or rehearsed) feelings, and it is the flow of these emotions that outlines the paintings' dramatic space.

Viewers accustomed to pictorial interpretations might assume that Owen Fu's paintings are about cute little things: faeries, dolls, or inanimate things given a face or body—from mundane objects to unnamed geometric lumps to an actual chair painted with limbs and expressions (*Robin's Chair*, 2020). Beneath the figurative mask, however, the *geisttiere* get no face. Considering the artist's sensibilities toward time and the minuscule beings that dwell within, his depiction of certain figures could very well be abstract arrangements nonchalantly collaged together—not a face, but two dots and a levitating curve; Not a chair, but a few short lines sorted in a certain way. The "figures" are born out of the reciprocal gaze between the viewer and the painting, and they're sometimes brought forth by the former's own *geisttiere*. This is why one would be mistaken to generalize Fu's works as "cute": If you only see the crab that is surrounded by flowers, there's no

Owen Fu, 《Voleur de lune》, 2021年, 布面油画, 116.8 × 152.4 厘米
图片致谢艺术家及天线空间(上海)

Owen Fu, *Voleur de lune*, 2021, oil on canvas, 116.8 × 152.4 cm
Courtesy the artist and Antenna Space, Shanghai





Owen Fu, 《Stealing Beauty》, 2021年, 布面油画, 91.4 × 152.4厘米
图片致谢艺术家及天线空间(上海)

Owen Fu, *Stealing Beauty*, 2021, oil on canvas, 91.4 × 152.4 cm
Courtesy the artist and Antenna Space, Shanghai

need to acknowledge the bowl that is seemingly sobbing [*Shanghai Crab (Table Disarmed)*, 2020]; If you're captivated by the innocent curiosity of the black imp that discreetly draws the curtains, then the tilting and falling human figures on the red curtain don't need to have anything to do with the fingers that might soon touch them (*Late Night Boogie*, 2022). For Fu, the paintings produce motions that toss and turn with the shifting moods, sometimes even acting as treatments for soothing or examining a specific feeling. The constant creations and revisions that emanate from flashing thoughts become the artist's meditation for finding inner balance. Just before a painting is moved out of the studio, a string of blue, ambivalent "pearls" could be added to it impromptu (*Flowers for Algernon*, 2022).

In the short writings that accompany his paintings, Owen Fu says: "No." The short poem *No Story* could be read as the artist's confession to the core of his oeuvre—*No* to (not) this body; *No* to (not) such admission; *No* to (not) confiding in the people I know I can trust and love. But I am not vocalizing these "No's," either.

In the long single life that stretches from his adolescence, Owen Fu has been re-enacting memories and fantasies that once skimmed over his mind, as well as recollections of small talks (*Small Talks*) with friends and family—like how "My father told me to be happy; My mother told me to lose

weight." Fu admits in the end that "If love is a question, I'm not able to answer." His *geisttiere* also says: "No." In Fu's paintings, his attitude, which we may tentatively classify as one of refusal and restraint, is translated into a kind of stubbornness or weirdness that doesn't sit right with any reality; Instead, it morphs into a pale profile enveloped by the mass of another face in dark grey, both turning their heads outwards the painting with apparent dissatisfaction (*Remains of the Day*, 2022). However, in some other works, the *geisttiere* may manifest as perceptive, devoting, desiring creatures, sometimes holding bouquets in what seems like a stage after the performance is over (*A Curtain Call*, 2022), sometimes reaching for the moon from a swing in the hope of seizing its light (*Voleur de lune*, 2021). They might even return to the embrace of a warm palette in a rare moment of tenderness, though they're still looking around with vigilance [*Untitled (Summer Thing)*, 2021].

In a sense, Owen Fu is also looking around. He uses his *Stealing Beauty* (2021) as his profile picture on social media. In the work, a budding face wrapped in a red scarf emerges from behind heavy white curtains, surveying the outside world with a gaze that is at once innocent and shrewd. Everything else on the canvas revolves around this pair of eyes while the viewers are left to ponder what this person sees. Some things happened too long ago. In looking around, one transforms time into loneliness, which may, in turn, dilute the impulse of rejection. "Stealing Beauty", Fu's 2021 solo show at Antenna Space, points to a yearning obscured by time. The featured artworks, which share a well-developed visual language, evidence Fu's capability to convert sadness and lust into a unique sense of "grey humor"—it is as if the paintings are attempting to mute the sheer intensity of his emotions. These more recent artworks differ from Fu's earlier works,



Owen Fu, 《One hundred ways to say "love you"》, 2018年, 布上油彩及炭笔, 157.5 × 266.7厘米
图片致谢艺术家及O townhouse (洛杉矶)

Owen Fu, *One hundred ways to say "love you"*, 2018, oil, charcoal and ink on linen, 157.5 × 266.7 cm
Courtesy the artist and O townhouse, Los Angeles



Owen Fu, 《I Light Myself》, 2020年,
布面油画, 121.9 × 152.4 厘米
图片致谢艺术家及 O townhouse (洛杉矶)

Owen Fu, *I Light Myself*, 2020,
oil on canvas, 121.9 × 152.4 cm
Courtesy the artist and O townhouse,
Los Angeles

Owen Fu, 《Untitled (turn it off)》, 2022年,
布面油画, 55.9 × 71.1 厘米
Owen Fu, *Untitled (turn it off)*,
2022, oil on linen, 55.9 × 71.1 cm

Owen Fu, 《Untitled (turn it on)》, 2022年,
布面油画, 55.9 × 71.1 厘米
Owen Fu, *Untitled (turn it on)*,
2022, oil on linen, 55.9 × 71.1 cm

图片致谢艺术家及天线空间 (上海)
Courtesy the artist and Antenna
Space, Shanghai



Owen Fu, 《Robin's Chair》, 2020年,
现成物上油彩, 79 × 43 × 43 厘米
图片致谢艺术家及 Balice Hertling (巴黎)

Owen Fu, *Robin's Chair*, 2020,
oil on found object, 79 × 43 × 43 cm
Courtesy the artist and Balice
Hertling, Paris

which retain messy and rough brushstrokes (e.g., *One hundred ways to say "love you"*, 2018; *I Light Myself*, 2020; *Hands*, 2020), as the former's linework softens into the blurry borders that meld together patches of colour [*Untitled (turn it on)*; *Untitled (turn it off)*, 2022]. The serenity and gentleness of these recent images may also result from the artist's development in self-restraint.

If viewed in a literal way, the paintings appear to have too many "holes." Or, to put it another way, every line and colour is in the service of these holes—around the holes, the artist gives rise to desires, digests desires, and occasionally conveys urban sentiments or essences of the wilderness through brushwork and hues. However, no matter the subject, these paintings are never wholly light-hearted or cheerful: the holes are forever voids that cannot be filled; it is a kind of temporality that is nearing expiration, a pair of lonely eyes in search of equally lonely things, and a mouth that calls without uttering a sound. The sceneries and characters that become figural by chance are self-revealed hints of the artist's lodging in the void; they are conduits of joys and sorrows once real, places for Owen Fu's *geisttiere* to dwell and play. By chance, and only by chance: these paintings let a broader picture of empathy surface from the disappointment or pleasure of the Other, as they also give the Owen Fu from *No Story* and his secret friends an opportunity to momentarily meet each other's gaze.

Translated by Kevin Wu