

新闻稿

星空间欣然宣布, 将于2024年10月15日呈现艺术家吴笛个展“在纸上”, 展出吴笛近两年来创作的全新作品。

在纸上

文 / 凯伦·史密斯

“艺术是探索, 不是结果” —— 吴笛

吴笛“在纸上”展览涵盖了十余件纸本作品以及以纸为媒介的作品, 它们是从她过去两年的大量创作中精选出来的。吴笛很早就开始使用纸张, 只是在近期的探索中, 她对纸的处理有所变化。这一次, 纸既作为表面也作为材料, 吴笛通过纸张的层叠、碎块的组合, 以直白的“拼贴”方式来构建作品, 最终呈现出装置般的质感与空间感。

从视觉上看, 作品的内容传递了吴笛一贯以来对各种议题的思考, 尽管她的表达更倾向于依赖直觉而非明确指示。每件作品中都出现了一些为人熟知的形象或符号, 虽然我们可能无法精确锚定它们在艺术史中的位置, 或一下指出它们的名字或作者是谁, 但对于吴笛来说, 这并不重要。她在玩弄艺术史, 把艺术史作为一种探究艺术发展的工具, 并反思今天的艺术家应该扮演何种角色。她以“在纸上”方式回应了一个挥之不去的疑虑: 在一个已经充斥着海量艺术品与艺术图像的世界里, 还有继续创造艺术的必要么? 这种疑虑源自她的个体经验, 一种对自我表达的不满: 如何在当代艺术中找到一种具备鲜明个性和强烈感染力, 一击即中的视觉形式, 能够在艺术家身后久久流传下去。今天, 艺术往往看似沦为一些重复而枯竭的视觉修辞或表达, 艺术家应该努力追求什么? 通过什么手段, 又为何追求? 当代的艺术表达是否还能像米开朗基罗 (Michelangelo, 1475—1564) 的《丽达》或波提切利 (Sandro Botticelli, 1445—1510) 的《维纳斯》那样直指人心、经久不衰?

吴笛从未将艺术品视为待价而沽的商品——尽管她的许多作品曾引用某些标志性艺术品来探究欲望的本质。她拥有一群忠实的支持者、追随者 (以及合作伙伴), 迄今为止, 她与影像创作人、音乐人、时尚设计师及平面设计师都有过合作。她创作摄影拼贴、雕塑及装置, 有些作品加入了声音, 有些则仅利用光为媒介。她使用的材料包括贴金箔的干柠檬、鞋子、如假阳具般的蘑菇……也许有些人会觉得她的创作方式和形式极不一致, 从所用材料到探讨的主题都不尽相同。她的艺术中融合了多种元素, 往往显得悬而未决, 富有敢于面对不完美的勇气。在我看来, 这种“也许”、“尚未完全”、“万一如此”的不安分感正是她的优势所在, 展现了她追求自己独特道路的决心, 以及以其他方式支持自己艺术选择的机智 (例如她在面料和服装设计方面的工作)。通过这样的方式, 她避免了商业的压力, 随心所欲地创作。她是理想主义者吗? 或者只是单纯天真? 也许吧。但这样的态度也令人耳目一新。观察吴笛的创作过程, 会明白她对每一个动作、每一道笔触都心知肚明, 即便她不能确切地告诉你她最终想要达到什么目标。她深知每一笔、每一张纸, 无论厚薄、粗糙或光滑, 在构建整个作品中发挥的作用。但最终会呈现怎样的作品? 这一点她自己也无法预料。作为一名从事艺术创作近二十年的艺术家, 吴笛并不急于将自己的创作固定在某一种表现形式上。

星空间 STAR GALLERY

艺术史的引用、某些标志性女神和构图的挪用，成为她反复使用的元素，也是她的风格得以被识别的特征。经过多年广泛的实验，在她近期的纸上作品中，对某些经典修辞的挪用达到了最强烈的隐喻效果和美学吸引力。这些元素的存在，以及吴笛将其并置的方式，既彰显了戏剧化的目的，又构成并主宰了一个完全开放，任人猜测的想象空间，让我们得以从全新的角度审视过去的审美或文化遗产。吴笛的创作方法引发了一系列严肃思考：这些艺术品在它们的时代传达了什么信息，它们因何成为日后的绘画表达所参照的标准。在她的纸上作品中，从维纳斯到丽达，从德国崇高的道德观到土耳其浴室中慵懒的异国女性，我读出了对当代女性在艺术中位置的隐晦而机敏的暗示——从艺术史上女性作为被动对象 / 缪斯的陈旧叙事，到关于女性作为创作者的可信度和尊严问题。尤其值得注意的是，作品触及了女性在当今社会地位的转变，女性如何正在摆脱作为处女、母亲、歇斯底里者、神秘者、巫婆、诱惑者和家庭主妇的强加定义。

吴笛通过重新诠释历史上强加给女性形象的被动角色，剥离了这些身体和裸女的已知背景，将熟悉的图像置于全新的情境中。在她的重新编排中，无论是维纳斯、丽达，还是那些已被变幻莫测的晚期文艺复兴、早期弗兰德斯和北德意志寓言画遗忘的女性形象，都被重新赋予了活力，尤其是在数百年后，社会议题被彻底颠覆的背景下，被注入了新的生命。问题在于，社会究竟进步了多少——或者说，社会真的进步了么？吴笛展现了女性如何夺回自己身体的再现权和解释权；被动的女性形象如何在表达中变得主动。她从熟悉的淡棕色背景中取出这些女性形象，饱含尊重地将她们置于当代艺术和生活的思考中。

吴笛还将她的挑衅延伸至秩序、混乱等问题。当社会中的“正确 / 适当”道德秩序发生变化时会有什么后果。历史上，文学和视觉艺术常常将极端天气作为外来的破坏力量的指征。吴笛的女性形象往往崩溃、扭曲，叠放在反映二十世纪战争决定性战役的黑白照片复刻之上——对这些战争的记忆已经深深镌刻在集体意识中，提醒着我们，当社会发生激烈冲突时，人类生命将遭受不可挽回的损失。这些视觉信息中还夹杂着一些更具现代意味的工人形象，那些英勇的无名氏，总是义无反顾地前往需要他们的地方做需要的事情。我们追寻着那些飞翔的电缆、导线和牵引绳，被一种庄严而大无畏的氛围所欺骗，去仰慕这些将我们与“进步”观念捆绑的纽带，却在梦醒时分发现它们不过是毁灭不可避免的明证。

秩序 / 无序、混乱和破坏，作为权力结构重新洗牌与常识重塑的象征，在吴笛巧妙结合的看似不相关的叙事和主题中回响。这些不同的组成部分及其碎片从它们过去的语境和含义中被释放出来，身后拖拽着历史的包袱，对我们当下的时代提出了一些貌似合理的见解。吴笛在这些作品中挖掘了人类天性中的某种本质对抗，有些人认为冲突是不可避免的；另一些人则认为，这是人类未能从历史中汲取教训的例证，因为我们似乎永远无法摆脱大规模毁灭的魔咒。在营造出不确定氛围的同时，吴笛可能会唤醒我们对混乱的恐惧，但在挑战我们习惯控制、定义和规范化的倾向时，她却在激发我们思考。我们能否承认，“圣人与罪人”、“美与丑”、“真善与恶”等二元叙事不过是被设计出来用于规训我们的神话？正如“阴 - 阳”符号所示，任何一方都无法脱离另一方单独存在。

然而，纸上作品并非全然弥漫着阴沉的预兆。显然，吴笛在玩，她在把玩随机相遇的力量，与自己相遇，也与可能性相遇。从落笔到成形，她的创作方法是一种讽刺性的、本能的直觉探索。这一过程打破并摧毁了那些标志性图像和形式的完美。当她裁剪被复制在纸张上（无论是通过手绘、喷墨打印还是照片打印）的图像时，她将这些属于过去的经典构造打碎，再以别样的方式重建，往往在其上覆以暗示着隐含线索的线条，揭示了一幅不为人知的更广大的图景。纸上没有一丝结构或痕迹是旨在以传统绘画或学院绘画的方式来描绘事物的。作品中蕴含了大量的感知，尤其是考虑到吴笛对中国画中的空间理解有一种天生的敏锐，我们得以通过暗示来解读事物之间的联系，而不必一一明确阐释。

在今天，一位艺术家如此专注于使用纸作为表达媒介并不寻常。有点讽刺的是，在中国文化中，最有价值的绘画恰恰是在宣纸上创作的，而在当代艺术领域中，纸上作品作为一种表现手法往往被低估。纸被视为

准备阶段的材料，一个用草图构思的地方，随后会转移到最终的，“正规”的艺术形式中，往往是布面绘画、雕塑，甚至装置或电影。而纸的多功能性是独一无二的。它的表面能够支撑各种材料，并能承受猛烈的操作：用蚀刻针刮划，用铅笔或钢笔反复涂抹，浸水，用砂纸打磨，覆盖其它纸张或颜料、金银铜箔等纸质层。你可以在纸上打印，剪裁并重组成新的整体。

在这一系列“纸上”操作中，吴笛充分发掘了我们认为具有“艺术性”的视觉语言的表现力。她的作品表面涂抹着丝绒般的色彩，丰富而深邃，富于微妙的变化。层次感和深度被时而作为饰面，时而作为基底的金银箔的光泽所强化。夺目的金属淡紫色照亮了诸如《无限景观》（72块面板）、《无题》（薰衣草天空）和《伊卡洛斯之翼》（双联画）等作品。就像喜鹊容易受闪光的小玩意吸引，我们凑近观察，发现了其中的质感；喷墨打印在纸上扩散的粉质，从来都没有黑色，而是由无限层次的铂金灰和铅灰色组成，从深秋的色调诸如氧化铜绿、普鲁士蓝、锰蓝，到意大利土地中的所有褐色（威尼斯红、生/熟赭色、生/熟棕色，及那不勒斯黄）。这些颜色，无论透明或不透明，都与铅笔线条结合起来，而这些线条从硬到软，展现出惊人的色调范围和生命广度。同样地，那些通过蓝色/红色复写纸刻写的线条，或是在纸上雕刻、切割出来的线条，产生了一种微妙却令人惊讶的形式间的边界感。

然而，问题依然存在：为什么一位当代艺术家需要如此直接地挪用其他（艺术史上的）艺术家的作品元素？当这些元素被移植到另一个人的作品，比如吴笛的创作中时，它们的意义是什么？吴笛对此没有明确答案。我也不确定是否需要一个明确答案。她借用“他人的语言来表达自己”，通过他人的视角传达她的思想，因为“图像挪用依然是那些有志于撼动并批判媒介化世界的艺术家们的热门选择” [1]。她的创作带有其他时代先驱者的回响，比如德国艺术家汉娜·霍赫（Hannah Höch, 1889—1978）——“作为德国先锋达达主义团体中唯一的女性艺术家，霍赫开创了将革命性的拼贴技术与政治颠覆内容结合的道路。”

所有这些结合起来，构成了一种极为丰富的探究性实践，既揭示了当代艺术的现状，也反映了我们所处的时代——一个充满不确定性的时代。如果这要求艺术家仔细审视自己的作品，质问这一动作、那一手势、这一笔划、那一形式……究竟合适不合适，那么矛盾的是，恰恰因为艺术家“永远无法完全确定作品的走向或最终呈现”，这种不确定性本身就成为了一种独特的严谨。不确定性赋予了作品力量。我们每个人，深层次上都是不确定的存在；是理性的力量帮助我们在生活中前行。尽管这些松散构成的图像看似是随机、临时的并置与组合，它们依然能够说服我们相信其现实性——人类情感、关系、物理空间以及时而剧烈甚至狂暴的爆发，这些都超越了任何言语所能描述的现实。正是这些匠心独运、技艺精湛地构成的个体碎片，创造出了我们在作品中感知到的现实。这种难以捉摸的现实感贯穿了吴笛的纸上作品。

[1]. 罗西·莱索，“汉娜·霍赫：富有使命感的反叛者”，February 13, 2024: <https://blog.fabrics-store.com/2024/02/13/hannah-hoch-rebel-with-a-cause/>

Press Release

Star Gallery is delighted to announce the presentation of Wu Di's solo exhibition *On Paper* on October 15, 2024, featuring the latest works by Wu Di from the past two years.

On Paper

Text / Karen Smith

"Art is exploration, not result."-- Wu Di

This exhibition of Wu Di's work on paper comprises a dozen works on, and using, paper, selected from a volume many times that number, all created through the recent two years. Wu Di has used paper from early in her practice. The difference here lies in the approach taken through this recent period of endeavour, with Wu Di treating paper as both surface and substance. She works across sheets of it, and with pieces of it, to structure compositions, quite literally, by means of assemblage. The resulting works are as textural, as spatial, as a physical installation.

Visually, in terms of their content, these works convey Wu Di's ideas about various topics as you might expect them to do. Here, notably, by means that are intuited rather than specified. Within each of the works, there will be figures and motifs that are immediately familiar. We may not be able to place them precisely in their art historical context, or to name them or their original creators, but for Wu Di this is unimportant. What is, is that we recognize her play with art history as a tool she uses to probe questions that begin from art as a progression of art history, and in regard of the role artists might play today. The "on paper" approach is her way of disproving a nagging doubt as to the point of continuing to make art in a world saturated with artworks and artistic imagery. Her doubts arise through personal experience of the difficulties faced in expressing herself in a wholly satisfactory manner; meaning, to the degree a visual message hits its target, and is of a distinctly individualistic and compelling form that might echo on through history long after the artist is gone. Where art today often appears to be little more than a sea of exhausted tropes of imagery and expression, what should an artist strive to achieve, by what means, and to what end? Can any expression contemporary hope to be as effective and long-lived as Michelangelo's Leda or Botticelli's Venus?

Wu Di has never given much thought to an artwork as an object of ready market appeal – even though numerous of her pieces explore the nature of desire as exemplified by certain iconic artworks. She has a loyal set of supporters, followers (and collaborators) and through her career to date, she has worked with moving image and with music-makers, with designers in fashion and the field of graphics. She makes photographic collages, sculptures and installations, some of them with sound, some using nothing but light. Materials have included desiccated lemons veneered with gold leaf, shoes, dildo-like mushrooms... One might feel she is wholly inconsistent in her output, and in approach, from the forms and materials used to the subjects explored. Where multiple elements converge in her art, it often appears daringly unresolved, reveling in its imperfections. To me, this air of "perhaps", "not quite", and

"what if" that unsettles the work, is her strength; evidence of a fearless determination to follow her own path, and the wit to find other means to support this choice financially (for example, her work with fabric and clothing design). By such means, she has thus far eschewed the pressures of commercial responsibilities and has remained free to follow her artistic will. Is she an idealist? Simply naïve? Perhaps. But, the attitude is refreshing, too. To observe Wu Di at work is to understand that knows exactly what she's doing in every gesture and mark, even if she can't say precisely what she's striving for. All the while understanding where every mark, every piece of paper, fits in constructing the whole, thick or transparent, rough or smooth, this she knows. But what will emerge at the end; that is something she couldn't tell you. Having been a practicing artist for almost two decades, Wu Di is in no hurry to tie her practice to a singular mode of expression.

Yet, references to art history, the appropriation of certain iconic goddesses and compositions, are elements to which she returns at regular intervals, and a characteristic by which her style is recognised. Following several years of wide-ranging experimentation, in the recent works on paper the appropriation of certain classic tropes attains its strongest metaphoric voice, and aesthetic allure. Simultaneously asserting both dramatic purpose and the spatial realm over which they preside as a space entirely open to speculation, and free imagination, through them and the juxtaposition of elements that Wu Di brings together, we see the aesthetic or cultural past in a new light. Wu Di's approach raises serious questions about what kind of messages these art works communicated in their time, and why it is that they have become standards by which subsequent successive painterly expression is measured. Here, on/in paper, from Venus to Leda, from high German morality to the lazy exoticism of women in Turkish bathhouses, I read deft allusions to the contemporary position of women in art – from hangover narratives from art history of woman as passive subject/Muse to questions of credibility and respect associated with women as creators. Not least, to the shifting status of women in society today; how women are sloughing off imposed definitions as virgins, mothers, hysterics, mystics, witches, temptresses and homemakers.

Suggesting this, Wu Di draws from the passive role imposed upon the figure of women through art history, recontextualising the accepted interpretations of familiar icons by stripping away the known context for these bodies and nudes. In her reconfigurations, the bodies of the women, be they Venus, Leda, and others now lost to the vagaries of late Renaissance and early Flemish and Northern German allegories, are revitalised and, importantly, injected with new life courtesy of issues that, several hundred years later, are turned on their head. The question is just how far society has – or has not – come. Wu Di gives us women taking back the representation and interpretation of their body; the passive women becoming active in their expression. She does them respectful service in plucking them from their familiar beige context, and thrusting them into the midst of present-day thinking about "art" and life.

Wu Di also extends her provocation to questions of disorder, chaos; to what happens when the "correct/proper" moral order of society changes. In literature as well as visual art, there is an historical association with weather as indicator of disruptive forces abroad in the world. Wu Di's women find themselves collapsing, contorted, over reproductions of black and white photographs that relate to decisive battles of twentieth-century wars – many of which are indelibly etched upon the collective consciousness as reminders of the irreparable damage wrought upon human lives when societies are in conflict. These, interspersed with figures of more modern workers, anonymous, fearless individuals, who go where they are required to do what is required of them. We seek the swooping lines of cables, electric wires, and guide ropes; duped by a certain air of majesty and daring into admiring the ties that bind us to notions of progress, itself evidence of the inevitable line of destruction that follows in its wake.

Order/disorder, chaos and disruption, indicative of a shuffling of power structures and common sense, reverberates through Wu Di's clever combinations of seemingly incongruous narratives and themes. The various components, together and their fragmented parts, are untethered from what they were, from what they meant in the past, and released to pass plausible comment our own times through the baggage they haul with them. Here, Wu Di is tapping into something essential in human nature in the form of confrontations that some might read as inevitable; others, as examples of what happens where humans choose not to learn lessons from history, for we seem to be eternally held in the thrall of explosive destruction. In conjuring an aura of uncertainty, Wu Di might awaken our fear of chaos, but in challenging habitual inclinations to control, to define, and normalize, she's provoking us. Can we acknowledge that the binary narratives of "saint versus sinner", "beauty versus ugliness", "bad or true good" are myths designed to keep us all in line? For as the yin-yang symbol embodies, none can exist without the other.

Yet, at the same time, the aura of these works on paper is not all ominous foreboding. Wu Di is playing; obviously with the power of random encounters, perhaps with herself, but also with possibilities. From the application of line to surface until it settles its form, hers is an ironic, instinctive method of seeking solutions intuitively. The process disrupts, destroys, the perfection of iconic images and forms as she cuts up the paper upon which they are reproduced (by whatever means Wu Di determines, which might be hand-drawn as often as inkjet or photographic printing); as she cut these exemplary constructs of the past apart, putting them back together in different ways, in reconstituted form, often overlaid with lines that serve as hints of connections that are invisible to us; a bigger picture of which we are ignorant. Nothing about the structures or the marks made on the paper are meant to describe something in the manner of conventional drawing or academic drawing. There's a lot of sensation contained within these works. Especially where Wu Di draws on an innate awareness of spatial understanding found within Chinese painting; we read the association implied between one thing, one place without having to have it spelled out for us.

It is unusual for an artist to use paper as a medium of expression so exclusively. It is ironic, too, that in China, where the most valuable painting know within this cultural framework are on rice paper, in the contemporary period, work on paper as a method of contemporary art has always been somewhat undervalued. Paper is considered preparatory field, a place where ideas get sketched out before moving to the final – "proper" – artwork, which habitually takes another form, be that painting on canvas, a sculpture, or even an installation or film. The versatility of paper is unique. Its surface can support all manner of materials and withstand heavy manipulation: scratching with an etching needle, repeated scribbling with pencil/pen, being dampened with water, sanded with sandpaper, layered with other paper and with paint and other papery layers – gold, silver and copper leaf. You can print on it and cut it up, reform pieces into a new whole.

In doing all of this, Wu Di makes expert use of the allure of the visual language we associate with "art". We're given surfaces coated using velvety palettes of colors that are richly dark and very subtle in their variation. There are textures and depths, layers enhanced by the luster of metallic surfaces from silver to gold leaf used as a veneer in places, or as a base in others. The eye-catching metallic lilac illuminates works like *A View to Infinity* (72-panel work), *Untitled* (lavender sky), and *A The Flight of Lcarus* (diptych). Like magpies whose eyes are drawn to the glinting light of bright shiny baubles, taking a closer look, we discover the textures; the powdery diffusion of inkjet prints on paper, where there's never a black but an infinite range of platinum and seal greys, as well as dark autumnal colors that go from verdigris to Prussian and Manganese blues, and then through all the browns of the hedgerows and the Italian soil (Venetian (red), (burnt/raw) Umber, (raw/burnt) Sienna, Naples (yellow) …). These,

whether opaque or in places transparent, are combined with lines made with pencil which, again, can go from hard to soft, and produce an extraordinary wealth of tonal ranges and breadth of life. Similarly, those lines scribbled through sheets of blue/red inked transfer paper (carbon copy paper). Other lines are incised, carved, into the paper. Again, this produces a subtle yet startling boundary between two forms when spotted.

Still, the question lingers: why would a contemporary artist need so directly to appropriate elements from the works of other (art historic) artists? What do these elements mean when transposed to another's work, as in the manner that Wu Di uses? Wu Di doesn't have a clear answer. I'm not sure one is required. She borrows someone else's "words to speak"; another's vision to convey her own because "Appropriated imagery (remains) a popular choice for artists wishing to shake up and critique the mediated world around them." [1] Her practice carries an echo of other pioneers in their time, like German artist Hannah Hoch (1889-1978) – "the only female artist associated with the pioneering Dada group in Germany, Hoch was a trailblazer, combining revolutionary photomontage techniques with politically subversive content."

It all combines to an extremely rich investigative practice that says a lot about art today, as well as the times in which we live; in which there is no certainty. If this demands that the artist look hard at the work and question this move, this gesture, this stroke, this form ... is it right or not, paradoxically, being "never quite sure how it's going to go, or how it's going to turn out" is its own kind of rigor. Uncertainty gives the work strength. We are all, deep down, uncertain creatures; it's the power of reasoning that helps us navigate through life. For all its seemingly random, ad hoc juxtapositions and combinations, these loosely structured images convince us of their reality – of human emotion, relations, physical space and dramatic, at times, violent eruptions, that goes beyond any words we could use to describe what we read as realistic in terms of the individual fragments of which these images are thoughtfully, skillfully composed. This is the intractable sense of reality that pervades Wu Di's work on paper.

[1]. Rosie Lesso, "Hannah Hoch: Rebel with a Cause", February 13, 2024: <https://blog.fabrics-store.com/2024/02/13/hannah-hoch-rebel-with-a-cause/>