

Qing Lu Uncanny Garden

Opening: April 26, 2024 18:00 – 21:00

Performance: April 26, 2024, 19:30

Exhibition: April 27 – May 24, 2024

Mariannenstrasse 33, 10999 Berlin

Curator: Heli Hsu

A kind of garden. With goldfishes in a pond, it may bring to mind a certain image of a Chinese garden. But not a particular sort. With the coexistence of, say, glass hearts and plastic lightning it resists—refuses even—the very image it attempts to conjure. The garden, staged on-site—here in the gallery—through the appropriation of existent images that might predispose and hijack the audience's interpretation is, as Craig Owens would have it, an allegory.

In the allegorical work, originality and authenticity are displaced; fragments take the lead. The strategy is, of course, collage. Since its invention, throughout the history of avant-garde, collage has been a critical means and technique to bring irreconcilable sources to an unfamiliar plane. And indeed, at the heart of Qing Lu's exhibition is the fragmentation of life achieved by collage. Distant and disparate media, forms, realities, cultures, temporalities and identities, rid of their original contexts, are truncated, then juxtaposed and assembled. Attention is directed to media themselves, and meanings are found in the arrangement.

Hence, a kind of New Year Painting (*suizhaotu*) in which petals, leaves and clocks by no means speak of its association with the title—a genre of Chinese painting that wishes for auspiciousness at the beginning of a new year; a kind of image on corrugated cardboard for delivery that visualizes the transience of the transition—in the air and on the road, with origins and destinations unknown; a kind of plant and flower in ink on silk paper that disrupts living organism. What glues different media in a work and, by extension, between works is resin—itself in a way a collage of the organic and the artificial.

To estrange the familiarity of objects and images from everyday life is to invoke the uncanny. With its derivation from the German word “*unheimlich*” (unhomely), the uncanny, an intriguing concept seen in various discourses in the arts since the early twentieth century, summons a feeling of unfamiliarity in what was once felt at home. We have seen it, somewhere, but, somehow, here and now, no precise identification to name it. The uncanny, according to Claire Raymond, suggests a homeless and rootless state of the modern. A sense of belonging, intimacy and stability supplied by home is troubled.

It is in this displacement of home that we get a touch of Qing Lu's works. They offer no fixed domicile, no cultural root, no definite identity, no true self, no promise of homecoming. Yet, there is leaving. As in his garden of art, where parts and fragments can be orchestrated, however eerily, so in life. Identity changes on the move; meaning grows in the flow, if some risk of uncanniness is allowed.

Text by Heli Hsu.

Artist: Qing Lu

Qing Lu was born in 1989 in Hunan, China. aka. Yong Zeng. lives and works in Berlin since 2014. He studied traditional Chinese painting at the Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts and sculpture at the Kunsthochschule Berlin Weißensee. In 2023 he graduated as a masterclass student of Prof Hanns Brunen. The central theme of the artist's work revolves around the mobilization of collective emotions in everyday life. This theme is deeply influenced by the artist's personal experience of continual migration, which is an ever-flowing journey. To express their artistic experiences, the artist employs performance, engages with the public, creates installations, produces videos, and utilizes various media forms.

Curator: Heli Hsu

PhD candidate in art history at Freie Universität Berlin and research associate at the Liching Foundation in Taipei, Taiwan. Co-author of *Ting Yin Yung Catalogue Raisonné: Oil Painting* (Hatje Cantz, 2020).