

Dark Side | HU Zi

Duration : 5 September 2020 – 30 September 2020

Address : HALL D, 2555 Longteng Avenue, Shanghai

Opening : 5 September 2020 16:00-19:00

They are in the color of merlot, the same color as coagulated blood. The skin is slightly fairer, the hair slightly duskier. They are gazing in the same direction.

“ Look, Michelangelo, her skin is pale, like a Carrara marble.”

“ Straight nose, grim and dangerous eyes, the face of a knight.”

“ Rembrandt, her eyes are also black, like a falling black diamond.”

“ Orange lips merely open, moist and evil. Pope, is she honest?”

“ If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away.”

“ Velázquez, she is walking even closer toward you.”

“ Same as the dark soul, is the dark side of a beaming light.”

They are in the color of merlot, the same color as coagulated blood. The flesh is slightly lighter, the soul slightly darker.

— Hu Zi

In her fourth exhibition at Don Gallery, Hu Zi presents her latest series of paintings *Dark Side*. She appropriates iconic portraits of sixteenth and seventeenth century kings and queens and fellow artists and refigures them into eleven minimalistic, pop-like images tormented by the dark side of the Renaissance and Enlightenment—periods during which both the arts and slavery flourished in tandem. Many of these images are so ingrained in the institutionalized western canon — Michelangelo, Titian, Velázquez, King Philip IV, Rembrandt, Alexander Pope, Elizabeth I of England, and Marie Antoinette... “These historical figures and their portraits have been reproduced in art history books and museum postcards ad infinitum — that we have become desensitized to them. Hu Zi’s variations gives us a fresh perspective, and makes us look anew.” (Andy Cohen) This series continues her own tradition of portrait making, and each of these portraits could be read as her self-portrait too.

From earlier gauche to both gauche and oil painting now, “Hu Zi’s lines are highly discriminating — angular, and straight forward. The jagged-edged outlines of her subjects’ physical features reinforce the dark sides of their personalities, power and time.” (Andy Cohen)

Also on display is Hu Zi’s self-portrait triptych, *Self-Portrait with Orange Leather* (2020), her very first explicitly defined self-portraits. “Here, in striking contrast to the depictions of overt facial expressions in all the other portraits of this series, Hu Zi hides her own eyes behind her hair. This concealment is nonetheless revealing. The viewer is left to put together the puzzle of her personality through the minimalistic lines of her profiled ear, nose, mouth and her hand. The works in the triptych are like film frames that zoom out from a close-up to full body shot in which we see her left hand holding a marijuana joint. ” (Andy Cohen)

“Hu Zi’s renderings of these icons engage in a sort of ‘schema correction’ — to borrow a phrase from EH Gombrich--of western canonical images (the schema) that results in her own original, visual language (the correction). As Gombrich wrote in *Art and Illusion*, ‘The artist cannot start from scratch, but he can criticize his forerunners.’ Hu Zi leaves plenty in her self-portrait for future artists to ‘correct’, as well as in her rectified portraits of historical icons from the 16th and 17th centuries. Such the dark sides of the historical portraits, history itself and the artist’s self-portraits merge into one. Light and darkness are as common to every period of human history as they are to each day and night — the Yin to the Yang. Hu Zi’s latest body of work embraces the underlying bipolar nature of human existence as well as society’s need to whitewash its dark side.” (Andy Cohen)

“Dark Side” is held jointly by Don Gallery and Shanghai Guangqi Culture Industry Investment Development Co., Ltd.