

HUXLEY-PARLOUR

3-5 Swallow Street, London, W1B 4DE / gallery@huxleyparlour.com

Wang Qingsong

22 September - 22 October 2015



Offering, 2003

This exhibition explores, through some of Wang's most acclaimed works, the role of spectacle in shaping reality in Contemporary China.

Despite the thorough staging of his photographs, which sometimes take place in cinema studios and require weeks of preparation and hundreds of extras, he considers his work to be a photojournalistic endeavour. Perhaps the social commentaries that these images carry are only possible through the illusion of the stage, and the best way to understand and comment on the spectacle is through emphasizing it. The globalization of China and the explosion of consumerism become key topics in Wang's oeuvre. The interest in Western art history is also a recurrent theme, which blends into Chinese aesthetic motives and literary traditions contributing to this feel of staged documentary.

Requesting Buddha no.1 (1999) constitutes the narrative beginning of the show and sets the tone for it. The image shows Wang posing as a Buddhist deity holding several consumer goods instead of the traditional godly attributes, making of him an early key commentator of the fast paced changes taking place in the cultural, social and economic scene in China. *Offering* (2003) and *Temple* (2010) continue to explore this topic in highly spectacular and crowded images.

Romantique and *Yaochi Fiesta* bring together Western and Chinese traditional images with a kitsch aesthetic that. Taking inspiration from ancient Chinese scrolls in its shape, and traditional Chinese gardens for its background, *Romantique* presents a restaging of images like Boticelli's *Venus* and Manet's *Dejeuner sur l'Herbe*.

MOMA Studio and Fotofest continue exploring this interest in Western iconography that criticises the Chinese new acquired taste for masterpieces of any time and epoch and their indiscriminate consumption. In a much rawer manner, these two images stage classical western paintings (Matisse's *Dance* and a Russian academy *Models in studio*) but the shot is not taken directly of the set but rather includes a public that is painting or photographing it. Wang becomes a spectator of the spectators.

Dream of Migrants and *Home* create an intriguing juxtaposition of depressing stories that re-explore the artist's early years as a child of migrant parents, and yet the obvious theatricality of them and the certain hope that shows through the images express the conflict of dreams and reality.

Amongst all the works at the gallery, perhaps the most subtle ones in their commentary are the still lifes *Ethereal Beauty* and *Auspicious Snow* (2003), where he changes the subject matter from human models to flowers made with meat, imitating Chinese ink drawings and creating a sort of Vanitas. Despite the change in subject matter, the minucious staging and attention to detail that characterises Wang's oeuvre is still highly visible, and so is the symbolism that characterises his work. Even more, these unusual works are, according to the artist, the ones where he feels he is being most true to himself and to his more reflective and spiritual facet. As he says "These meat flower pieces are straight from my own heart".

One Dream, One World (2014) is his latest work which re explores the topics of globalization and satirize the education system in China and the perception of mass consumer goods as luxury in certain parts of the world.

For more information and images please contact
Thea Gregory: 0207 434 4319 / thea@huxleyparlour.com

Website: www.huxleyparlour.com

Facebook: [@huxleyparlour](https://www.facebook.com/huxleyparlour)

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