

Samson Gallery

Victoria Fu: Milk of the Eye
November 2, 2012
By Marcus Civin

QUESTIONS Marcus Civin / ANSWERS Victoria Fu

I wonder who the figures are? Who are they...? Would you say? Who holds the mirror? Whose face? Whose back?

All the represented figures are figments, representations, masks and actual warm-bodied people. Distant. Close. Whispering in our ears from very far away. They are me; they are you; they are they. Specific and general, the figures represent a flexibility of referents and pronouns. Nothing is pinned down, yet it feels familiar and intimate.

I wonder: why drawing? Why this kind of photorealist drawing? What led to there?

Drawing has been a constant, and it led to filmmaking. Perhaps these drawings function in a similar way as the films do: microscopic, hyper-real representations that require crisp exactitude but maintain a gulf of distance both in imagery and framing...like a faraway sound coming out of someone's lips right next to our ears.

I wonder about the framing in the drawings, the framing within framing, and framing in general in the photos and films as well... is this something you think about? Containers? Edges? Holding in?

YES. Framing plays a large role, that gesture towards underlining the blank whiteness of paper as much as the drawings themselves—and expanses of wall in installation. Inclusion/exclusion. Absence/substance.

Before, you mentioned "reverse Photoshop" in reference to the Landscape film. What does "reverse Photoshop" mean?

The film depicts the act of colors spraying onto a white surface by an invisible hand/force. First, there was spray paint, then there was its simulation by Photoshop—and here, the film quotes the gesture of Photoshop with spray paint again.

It hurts, the shining light in my eyes reflected back from those mirrors? Not really—but, it does a little? Does it hurt you?

No, it doesn't hurt. It's silvery magic milk. Erasure that also conjures.

As much as it is possible and across time, do you love the Russian filmmaker, Andrei Tarkovsky?

He's my father, my son, my brother—but not my lover.

Who, then, is your lover?

My lover is a stranger to me.

How big are the drawings?

Very huge and very small.

Are you a landscape painter?

Yes.

What is a microscope?

Watching but not seeing.

Is there hate?

Yes. Muffled and muted, like it can be.

Inside, what do the walls look like?

Clean, porous, sheened.

If you were to assign colors to ideas, what color is this: "A faraway sound coming out of someone's lips right next to our ears"?

A frosty marigold.

What color is this: "Nothing is pinned down, yet it feels familiar and intimate"?

Soft gray-purple.

What color is this: "He's my father, my son, my brother—but not my lover"?

Silvery, flickering, liquid white.

But how much more water is there on the planet than there is hair?

Are you terrified of the ocean?

What is the difference between a mirror and the ocean?

What is the difference between a halo and a mirror?

How do you wrap sandwiches?

How do monks talk?

Are you like your grandmother?

Was her hair like yours?

Whose shoulders are more hunched, yours or hers?

What color is death?

MILK OF THE EYE

Victoria Fu's solo exhibition, Milk of the Eye, includes color photographs, looped film projections and precise graphite drawings. Fu evokes a middle place, an edge, loosely remembered scenes from an old, vaguely familiar film. The crackly old film is more spare now; there is a nervy, quiet space between scenes. A film may be a drawing, or a photographic fragment may be a drawing. A pencil drawing may not be drawing, not exactly. There is a narrative overlay, a wondering about icons and about representation in general. There are unfamiliar characters—some ghost-like, some from an even earlier time, some holding mirrors and some framed by mirrors.

Many artists want ambiguity to come across in their work, to embrace opposites, to simultaneously suggest near and far, to encourage association but dig specific rabbit holes. In order to achieve this, the artist must be, in their heart, wholly kind, and in their research, they must be completely thorough--exhaustive even. Generosity before restraint. The ambiguous

artist must be round: they must know all sides, be honest with themselves about specifics; they are first exacting so that they can then excise, excerpt and edit. Only from a real generosity will the splashes from the horse's hoofs replace the horses. The artist who can exploit ambiguity is rare. Fu is that artist.

In photographic color fragments, celluloid film, and with graphite on paper, Milk of the Eye is unsettling. I am thinking about a love affair ended prematurely, an exploding face, unwanted halos and persecuted saints. I am thinking about how human bodies decompose. Perhaps we will become troposphere-mesosphere-stratosphere, colors, moody grains, underground. The dead are bandages, broken necks, slippery-soft graypurple, silvery-orange spray erasure.

-- Marcus Civin