

Lin Wang

Still Life

24th of February - 27th of March

In her first major solo exhibition in Trondheim, artist Lin Wang presents recently produced artworks in porcelain, large scale sculptures and a series of integrated video works. Using globalization as a backdrop, she brings representations of trade in goods, cultural and political exchanges, the sea, seafarers and the body into a contemporary discourse.

In her long term research project *Exotic Dreams and Poetic Misunderstandings*, embarked upon in 2016, Lin Wang presents installations of delicate porcelain, performance pieces and other media that create narratives about the East and the West.

At Trøndelag Centre for Contemporary Art, Wang presents the next part of her project - *Still Life*. The still life's portraiture of vanitas and beauty has fascinated humans for centuries, especially the message of memento mori and that nothing lasts forever. The genre painting reached its golden age in the Netherlands around the 17th century, and appealed to the senses through its portraiture of precious objects, flowers, exotic birds, animals, food- and drinks. In the exhibition we find several installations of classical still lifes, placed as souvenirs in beautiful museum vitrines, and as a lavishly laid still life table with hand painted and gilded porcelain sculptures of animals and exclusive foods. The contents of the vitrines have a distinct curious and historic character, and it is a mix of typical elements from the genre painting; "exotic" fruits, pieces of meats, suggestive oysters and gilded animals and insects. The countless references, in choice of materials and motives, are closely intertwined, layer upon layer, and continuously shifts our perspective and gaze.

In Wang's fabulating universe, the classical Chinese tradition for stylized blue landscapes are intertwined with the tradition of sailor tattoos. Ships, swallows, pin-ups, roses and religious symbols are carefully hand painted alongside eastern landscapes in characteristic cobalt blue pigments. Both traditions have a simplified language, key elements and symbols. The crew on Captain James Cook's ships were the first from the west to get tattoos as memories of their travels to the great tattoo cultures of Japan, China and the Pacific Islands. During the second World War tattoos became standard amongst American marines stationed outside Honolulu, where Sailor Jerry became known for his distinct Old-School style that we associate with sailor tattoos and that today decorates a lot of non-sailing people's arms and legs. Decorative Chinese porcelain of today is based on motifs from the Netherlands that originally were replicas of Chinese originals, produced before the 17th century. These motives have become sort of homeless as a consequence of constant replication and travel between different cultures.

In the large porcelain sculpture "Souvenir Globe Girl", that almost has a 1:1 scale, the ceramic materials are stretched to its outermost potential for what is physically possible. The sculpture is covered in a fine layer of porcelain and partially gilded with golden glaze. The risqué pin-up motif has become a three-dimensional figure holding a massive globe on her shoulders, thus replacing classical images of the Greek mythical figure *Atlas*. The globe draws a map of cobalt blue Old-School tattoos. This color is associated with decorative fine china, although the

cobalt ore was imported from old Persia and not adopted by Chinese craftsmen until the 9th century. The placement of “Souvenir Globe Girl” on top of a European pool pallet, used for transportation, underlines the continuum of travel from one place to another. Thus Wang reveals threads of history complexly interwoven through import, export, adaptation and beliefs about the exotic and the poetic potential in the misunderstandings that can arise.

The luxurious goods portrayed in Dutch still lifes were made available through the naval power and early colonial expansion of the West. The historical still life-paintings of the golden age are therefore also symbols of the power of the West and its exploitation and exotification of the East. The trade routes along the Silk Road went between Europe and East-Asia, and made cultural, political and religious exchange possible. But it was also a quest for conquering the unknown exotic and establishing empires.

The exhibition culminates in an installation of sculptural elements forming a visual feast or cornucopia. Beautiful “exotic” animals, Chinese pots and plates, peacock feathers, a piece of flesh gilded inside and painted with a motif of Jesus' face - estranged by all the times it has been replicated, and a wealth of exclusive foods. The sculptural elements form a landscape that is underlined by three video works where body, ornamentation and horizons merge together. Like a virtuoso, Wang blends the elegant and beautiful with disturbing and kitsch-like elements that have been added elegantly and beautifully, such as tattooed pieces of skin, poorly executed sailor tattoo-motives, a decapitated prince and a bull's head. Lin Wang's installation is a visual feast and evokes associations with the beauty and rich symbolism of Dutch still life paintings, while at the same time eliciting a sense of discomfort and unrest of the stories told about the East and the West.

Lin Wang (b. 1985, China) primarily works with sculpture, porcelain installations and performance. Her work involves different aspects such as sound, smell, food, video and tattoo art. Wang has a BA from the China Academy of Art and an MA from the Bergen Academy of Art and Design. She has presented her work at Vigelandmuseet and Kunsthall Grenland, and she has held performances at KODE and Kunstnerens Hus. Her work has been acquired by the National Museum in Oslo and the Municipality of Oslo. Wang lives and works in Oslo, and also works in Jingdezhen, China.

Several elements of this exhibition were made possible to produce through a residency at Ringebu Centre for Ceramic Art. Wang has received support from Arts Council Norway, The Audio and Visual Fund, and Regional Project Funding for Visual Art.

Text by Margrete Abelsen, Utstillingsprodusent at Trøndelag Centre for Contemporary Art