

*We haven't talked since last summer;  
Mom says I told you,  
Dad says let it go,  
My brother asks me where your American dream has flown.*

Owen Fu, 2023.

Balice Hertling is pleased to announce *Last Summer*, a solo exhibition by Owen Fu. For his second solo show at the gallery, Fu discussed his practice with fellow artist Xinyi Cheng, exploring the relationship between intimacy and painting. The following is an excerpt of a larger conversation that will be accessible online in our Reading Rooms.

**Xinyi Cheng:** When I look at your paintings, with all the brush strokes and their movements on the surface, I have the impression that there is a feeling of randomness and immediacy when you paint. And I think you would not want your picture to look labored, precisely carved or looking complex. But you were talking about a slow process, which seems a bit different from my assumption. So I want to ask you, how do you envisage your ideal presentation of the picture? For the texture and brushwork of the painting, do you attempt to do it in one go?

**Owen Fu:** It's like you have to work hard to show that you've done it effortlessly. Those completely effortless lines are not actually drawn in one go. Sometimes, I draw nearly 20 or 30 lines effortlessly to finally create the one line I want. The remaining lines are still there, just covered up so they can't be seen. But that doesn't mean they didn't exist. The lines that appear as casual strokes, the lines that wrap around a figure, the lines that connect light sources and create light, the lines representing troubled thoughts—all are the result of repeated friction. They may appear easy, but they are lines condensed from countless twisted thoughts and drawn with great effort. I don't want people to notice the effort; I want them to appear effortless. The surface I strive for is similar. It's a state where the oil paint gently adheres to the canvas. This lightness doesn't imply the use of a single color. For example, I start with a thin layer of blue, followed by a thin layer of red on top of the blue, then some thin yellow on top of the red, and finally, a thin layer of black to cover them all.

**Xinyi Cheng:** I noticed that a lot of your recent paintings are in dark colors and have a light bulb or a colored light in the picture with lots of lines. Can you tell me about it?

**Owen Fu:** The title of this exhibition is *Last Summer*, or 剩夏, in my translation, "The leftover of summer." It refers to the emotions I experienced during a trip with a friend last summer. The trip itself was enjoyable, but the period leading up to it was not. This friend was also my neighbor and landlord, and the last two years of our four-year cohabitation were difficult for both of us, clouding our relationship. We decided to go on a holiday to Italy, a sunny country. During the trip, we made an effort to be happy, and we did have a lot of fun. However, beneath the happiness of our sun-drenched journey lay the unshakeable cloud of our troubled relationship. Even when covered with vibrant colors, that layer of darkness remained. After the trip, I moved away, and we haven't spoken in almost six months—we no longer keep in touch. The experiences from that trip are reflected in the works of this exhibition. The dark colors represent my feelings during that time. Even in a bright environment, if the heart is shrouded in thick fog, the colors we perceive become muted and somber. But I also encountered many pleasant things during the trip, so I painted elements unique to southern Italy—fruits, summer moods, flowers, swimming pools, and various experiences I had. For example, I discovered that every gas station in Italy offers freshly squeezed orange juice, which became a ritual for us. We ordered glasses of fresh orange juice at each stop and drank them together. That's why one of the paintings is titled *Succo d'arancia*, which means "orange juice" in Italian. Additionally, when people think of Italian desserts, they often mention cheese, tiramisu, panna cotta, and so on. However, in the south, they have a dessert called "cocomero", which simply translates to the word "watermelon". Watermelon is considered a dessert there. So, after dinner, I frequently ordered watermelon as my dessert. It was an interesting experience, which inspired the painting *Semi di Cocomero*, meaning "watermelon seeds".

*Owen Fu was born in China in 1988 and lives and works in Los Angeles, USA.*

*Fu earned two BA degrees, in philosophy from Stony Brook University and in art from the Art Institute of Chicago, before completing an MFA at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, USA.*

*Recent solo shows include Antenna Space, Shanghai, China; Mine Project, Hong Kong, China; O-Town House, Los Angeles. Recent group exhibitions include Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, USA; Gagosian, Hongkong, China; Laurel Gitten, New York, USA; Balice Hertling, Paris, France; Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, USA.*