

Owen Fu

"After Hours"

February 12 — March 27, 2021

"Must be a full moon out there." — After Hours (1985) Martin Scorsese

For his first solo show in France, Owen Fu presents a selection of works to which daytime logics do not apply. These paintings, on canvases and on found interior furnishings, give one the impression of being cast into a confusing night, or of finding oneself standing in a stranger's living room. From oil paint, a threadbare carpet, and the upholstery of a lonesome chair, figures and faces begin to emerge. Some of these faces feel palpably there, while others seem to slide out from their surroundings before retreating once again into shadow.

In this way, Owen Fu creates an experience of pareidolia : the tendency to perceive a pattern or shape in an otherwise ordinary image. In hazy brushstrokes of grey, green, brown, and white, or on the back of a wooden chair, there lurk any number of hidden charms. Such perceptions may be categorized as productive failures to accept reality as it is given. But instead of inverting realism completely, as is done in dream life, "After Hours" reminds us that the oddities and paranoia of the night run on the same durational track as the safety and normalcy of the day.

The title of the exhibition references Martin Scorsese's 1985 film of the same name. In the film, a perfectly ordinary man endures an interminable New York night full of rabbit holes and bad surprises. As if Mercury has gone retrograde, all communication breaks down, and the normally simple task of getting home becomes impossible. The suit-wearing protagonist becomes trapped downtown, with all the freaks and artists who relish the dark hours as moments that can be stolen away from capitalist time.

This disintegration of what were assumed to be "normal" social codes in fact reveals how each act of communication is a risky leap of faith. As Walter Benjamin writes in his 1929 essay on Surrealism, reading itself is nothing short of telepathy. If the figures in Owen Fu's works are communicating, then, it is through this moon-stricken madness of telepathy or the nonverbal languages of proximity.

The truth is that the ordinary is already imbricated in the extraordinary. As Benjamin writes, "we penetrate the mystery only to the degree that we recognize it in the everyday world, by virtue of a dialectical optic that perceives the everyday as impenetrable, the impenetrable as everyday." More than simply re-enchanting quotidian life, Owen Fu seems concerned with both banal objects and mysterious forces in equal measure. As the artist writes in a poem that accompanies the exhibition : "Robin's Chair, / Owen's hair, / I am wondering if the moon care."

Owen Fu was born in China in 1988. He lives and works in Los Angeles, California (USA). He earned two BA degrees, in philosophy from Stony Brook University and in art from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, before going on to complete an MFA at ArtCenter College of Design. Recent solo shows include Mine Project (2020, Hong Kong) and O-Town House (2020, Los Angeles). He has also been given online presentations with Gallery Platform LA (2020) and David Zwirner Platform: Los Angeles (2020). The artist showed his work in Europe for the first time in the group show "Gennariello (part II)" at Balice Hertling last summer (2020).