PRESSE

FAY KU

H GALLERY

Directrice et Fondatrice :
Hélianthe Bourdeaux-Maurin

39, rue Chapon
75 003 Paris

+33 (0)1 48 06 67 38
galerie@h-gallery.fr
www.h-gallery.fr

L'officiel Galeries & Musées

L'officiel des Galeries et des Musées
May, 2018



H Gallery, Paris
Exposition du 18 mai 2018 au 16 juin 2018

Fay Ku, No Place That Does Not See You

La H Gallery présente du 18 mai au 16 juin les œuvres de l'artiste taiwanaise Fay Ku.

Les œuvres de Fay Ku appartiennent à une autre dimension. Des corps se retrouvent dénudés, dans une ambiance mystérieuse et fantastique : des silhouettes presque symétriques se font face, serait-ce des jumeaux, ou peut-être le simple reflet d'une même personne ?

La blancheur omniprésente du papier polyester place les corps au centre de nos contemplations. Sur certaines de ses peintures, Fay Ku, délaisse en effet l'arrière-plan et garde son support immaculé pour ne laisser que les figures humaines.
Mais le blanc du support laisse parfois place à des éléments oniriques, fantastiques, qui invitent à contempler un monde mystérieux. Deux femmes dans *Les belles images* sont excentrées pour que nous puissions apercevoir un troisième personnage en arrière-plan, allongé, qui semble sans vie. Une silhouette grise émane de son corps, comme si son âme se préparait à monter vers les cieux. Un bras s'étend d'ailleurs dans le ciel, son index pointé vers la droite, il s'avère lui donner la direction et le guider vers les parties de ce monde que nous ne pouvons pas voir en tant que simple observateur de la toile.

Les traits fins, juste tracés par une ligne noire, renforcent cette impression de mystère et les couleurs apparaissent sur quelques éléments de la toile : un reptile d'un vert lumineux, s'enfonce dans l'eau, ne laissant apparaître ni le commencement, ni la fin de son corps. Il ne nous reste plus qu'à imaginer le reste de l'animal, comme nous devons imaginer ce que nous ne pouvons pas percevoir : les peintures de Fay Ku invitent à se perdre dans ces mondes qu'il reste encore à inventer.

Texte : Angèle Imbert

Crédit Visuel : Fay Ku, *Three Eyes*, 2016, Technique mixte sur papier polyester, 106, 7 x 76, 2 cm

39, rue Chapon
75003 PARIS
+33 (0)1 48 06 67 38
galerie@h-gallery.fr
www.h-gallery.fr

LE FIGARO

Le Figaro
2018

FAY KU : NO PLACE THAT DOES NOT SEE YOU

Du 25 mai au 16 juin 2018 - H Gallery - Paris (75011)

Pour sa première exposition personnelle en France, Fay Ku, artiste américano-taïwanaise, déploie sa production la plus récente : un message politique fort, un syncrétisme qui tend vers l'universel associés à une esthétique aussi belle que dérangeante et une utilisation du dessin tout à fait originale.



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Santa Fe Reporter
May 31, 2013...

SANTA FE NEW MEXICAN

Mnemonic play: Fay Ku

Adele Oliveira | Posted: Friday, May 31, 2013 5:00 am

Fay Ku's exhibition *Ana Nina Mana*, which opens at Eight Modern on Friday, May 31, takes its title from Fellini's *8 ½*. In the film, protagonist Guido Anselmi, an Italian movie director, remembers magic words he learned as a child to make a painting come alive at midnight — *ana nini mana*. In the course of chanting the phrase to herself, Ku remembered *nini* as *nina* and decided to keep the title based on her altered memory.



Fay Ku: "Rain or Shine"

Fay Ku: Rain or Shine, 2012, graphite, watercolor and ink on paper

"It's mostly an emotional reference," Ku told *Pasatiempo* from Brooklyn, where she is based. "When I recently watched *8 ½*, I hadn't seen it for seven years, and I was thinking about how we shed our skin every seven years or how the cicadas come out every seven years or so, too. The first time I watched *8 ½*, I wasn't super happy with my own work, and I thought the film was awful and self-absorbed. But when I watched it again, I thought it was brilliant. *Ana nini mana* is such a pivotal memory, and it's a catalyst for the rest of Guido's life."

Ku was born in Taiwan to Chinese immigrant parents, who moved to the U.S. shortly after her birth. After living with her grandmother, Ku joined her parents when she was 3 years old and spent her childhood moving between suburbs in Oklahoma, Texas, Colorado, and Maryland. "My parents weren't very social, and we were isolated in many ways. Diversity was not cool at all growing up. At home, we spoke Mandarin and ate Chinese food, but it was very different than actual Chinese culture." Ku's sense of that culture beyond her own home in overwhelmingly white communities came mostly through stories. "The things that were not actually around me were translated through history, myth, and folklore."

Ku's work is unearthly and sublime, the stuff of dreams and nightmares. A mixture of watercolor, graphite, and ink on paper, Ku's drawings focus on figures engaged in surreal interactions with themselves and others. In *Bwafégir*, two figures — half men, half birds — claw at each other with talon-like toenails and fingernails, their teeth bared in fury and pain. *Local Weather* is more subdued but no less disquieting: five nearly identical women, dressed in yellow raincoats, languish with fishbowls on their heads. Their hair streams around their faces, and we wonder if they are drowning. *Lunchbox* is amusing and odd: here, we see no faces. Six pair of voluptuous legs and bottoms, clad in torn black stockings and vermilion high heels, are surrounded by about a dozen penises dressed in dapper pastel suits. The male appendages worship at the ankles of the lovely legs, or interact with one another, inclined as though in conversation, as they stroll across the grass. Ku's line is calligraphic and precise, but if you look at certain pieces (like *Rain or Shine*) up close, you can see where she erased and started over, or pressed very hard and tore at the paper.

Santa Fe Reporter
...May 31, 2013

"I draw on printmaking paper that's not actually meant for drawing, and you can't erase without abrading the surface. It also scars really easily with a hard pencil. Once I get too comfortable [with a material] I have to switch. When you're not thinking, 'How did I erase that mark?' and wonder what's happening, you're not playing with the material. Sometimes I think I'm a little too precious, a little too controlled, and should let go more."

When Ku first started making art, she wanted to paint like Baroque artist Caravaggio. "I was trained in oils," she said. "And who wouldn't want to paint like Caravaggio?" It wasn't until she got to graduate school at New York's Pratt Institute that Ku realized she wasn't supposed to paint like Caravaggio. While the human psychological drama represented in his work still appealed to her, Ku's mode of expression was very different from Caravaggio's dense chiaroscuro paintings. "I really resisted drawing at first. I wasn't very sophisticated about contemporary art, and my notions about art were antiquated. I thought if Caravaggio is valid, then drawing isn't valid. I thought I wasn't supposed to make pencil-on-paper works because it was easy for me. But being easy didn't make it invalid; it was my natural way of working."

After graduate school, Ku moved from residency to residency in locales as diverse as Honolulu and Omaha. She completed two residencies in New Mexico — at the Santa Fe Art Institute in 2008 and Albuquerque's Tamarind Institute in 2009. Though she's happy now to be based in one place, moving left its mark on Ku's work. Her materials dwindled, and different landscapes influenced her presentations.

"The landscape of the Southwest really speaks to me. It's like a drawing in it looks like one of my works with washes of color, spareness, and light." When Ku was at the Santa Fe Art Institute, she completed just one painting: the 16-foot-long *Flower Warriors*, a group of fierce, one-breasted Amazonians in colorful Chinese dress ruling on robust horses across the canvas into battle. "I hadn't done anything much less horses, but suddenly I had the physical horizontal space. I didn't understand this till years later, but my vision blew wide open, and that happened because I was there."

details

▼ *Ping Ku: Awe Mine Moon*

▼ Opening reception 5 p.m. Friday, May 31; exhibition through July 11

▼ Eight Modern, 231 Delgado St., 983-0231

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Santa Fe Reporter
May 28, 2013...



Fay Ku

Half and Half

Fay Ku's subjects are out of this world

By [redacted]

Centaurs, mermaids and Minotaurs have nothing on image maker Fay Ku's creations.

"It's a recurring motif I've come in the past," Ku says of her mythical, half-human/half-beasts. She adds that the creatures aren't based on a specific person, but rather on an amalgamation of innate human values and ideas—an avatar of sorts.

"Just like video game characters can portray different aspects of themselves according to who you next them," Ku explains, her protagonists display different personalities.

"That one is still a little bit mysterious to me," Ku tells SFR of "Birdfight" (pictured).

The former Santa Fe Institute [illegible] suggests that the piece is also another vision of [illegible].

"I like the idea of a bird fight, because it's these naked birds that are armed against each other; it doesn't necessarily represent a particular person, just two players—two figures in a ritual," she says. "Anytime there's a ritual, you're devoid of ego and personality, and you just become a vessel for drama."

Other pieces in the show continue her exploration of half-human/half-birds. A fascination, she says, emanates from observing people inadvertently play with their hair—one of her pet peeves.

39, rue Chapon
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+33 (0)1 48 06 67 38
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her comfort "anxiety and how aggression can turn inwards."

Her love for happy endings is feathered cool. "They were the first feminist movies, because they showed justice for women didn't just come overnight," she says.

The duality of her creative process is also influenced by her multi-cultural upbringing as a child of Taiwanese immigrants who was raised in a white American suburb.

"It's funny, because when I speak about it, I have to make it more black and white than it is," she says. "It's actually a lot more nuanced and complicated."

But when it comes to her teenage years, "I never really knowed mainstream American culture and never became 100 percent socialized."

This Friday, she presents her latest body of work at Eight Modern in an exhibit called *Ask Me Now*, a title borrowed from a scene in Federico Fellini's *8½*, where Guido remembers the words from a childhood charm supposed to have the power to make eyes in paintings "come to life."

"Wonderful, I was thrilled and I didn't get it," Ku says. Upon rediscovering it as an adult, she encountered the "first layers of our playful relationship, male-female. The movie is about the process, and the process of making a movie is the movie."

The search now translates to her exhibit. "In some ways, this work is that process of trying to figure out things," she says.

"I don't see the answer right now, but soon on, I'll get it, no." Ku says of the show's elements, referring to them as "little pieces of figures that somehow work together."

"Sometimes, it takes me a little while to see them as pieces," she continues. "If you're in it, you can't see the way you see it."

She calls those moments "blind spots" that become apparent only in hindsight. "We're constantly revising our own narrative; even if it's a couple years later, we're a different puzzle."

Ku insists that the breadth of her work is visible in *Ask Me Now*, though she'll let the viewer make up his or her own mind as "a lot of the times" she jokes, "the artists themselves are not the brightest ones."

Fay Ku: Ask Me Now
5-7 pm Friday, May 31. Free.
Eight Modern, 231 Delgado St., 995-0231

Juxtapoz
May 13, 2013

JUXTAPOZ

FRIEZE WEEK HIGHLIGHT: FAY KU W/EIGHT MODERN @ PULSE

May 13, 2013



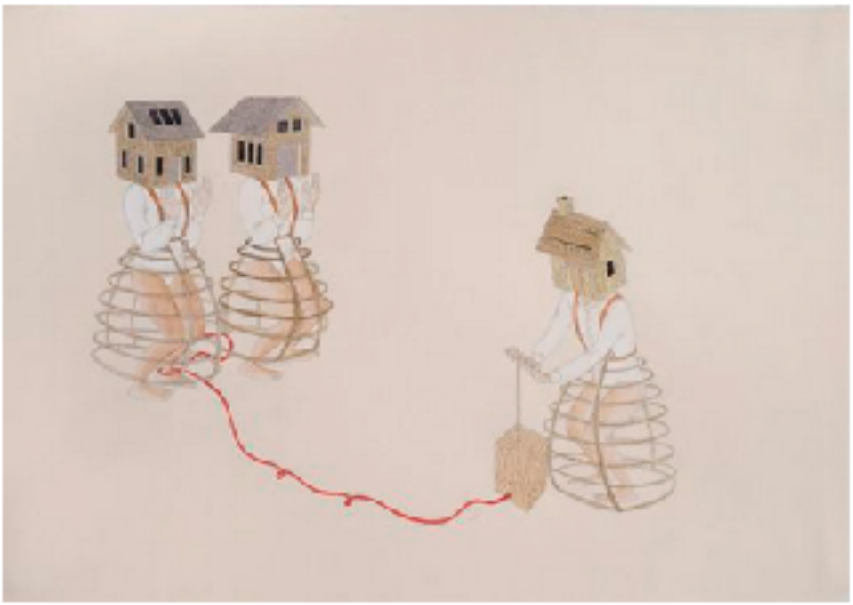
One of our favorite artists we saw this weekend in NYC for Frieze and surrounding fairs was Fay Ku at the Eight Modern booth in Pulse. Eight Modern, based in Santa Fe, New Mexico, had a few strong pieces from the Taiwan born Ku, who has built a body of work on paper that "recalls the callousness and lack of empathy of children, who have not yet learned the customs and modes adults use to mask society's true savagery."

39, rue Chapon
75003 PARIS
+33 (0)1 48 06 67 38
galerie@h-gallery.fr
www.h-gallery.fr

FAY KU – ASA NISA MASA by New American Paintings

June 12, 2013, 8:40 am
Filed under: Review, Santa Fe | Tags: Asa Nisa Masa, Claude Smith, Eight Modern, Fay Ku

Fay Ku's solo exhibition *Asa Nisa Masa* at Eight Modern in Santa Fe features delicately executed graphite, ink and watercolor works inspired by her memories, experiences and relationships as a result of her upbringing in white suburbia as the child of Chinese immigrants. Through her use of subtly articulated line and negative space, Ku references East Asian artistic traditions, while her focus on figurative representation through a predominantly female-centric subject matter, suggests more contemporary Western perspective. Her often surreal visual narratives borrow from myth and folklore to explore the intersection of personal, social and cultural tension. – *Claude Smith, Albuquerque/Santa Fe Contributor*



Fay Ku | *Thread*, 2011, graphite, watercolor and ink on paper, 15 x 22.5 inches, image courtesy of Eight Modern

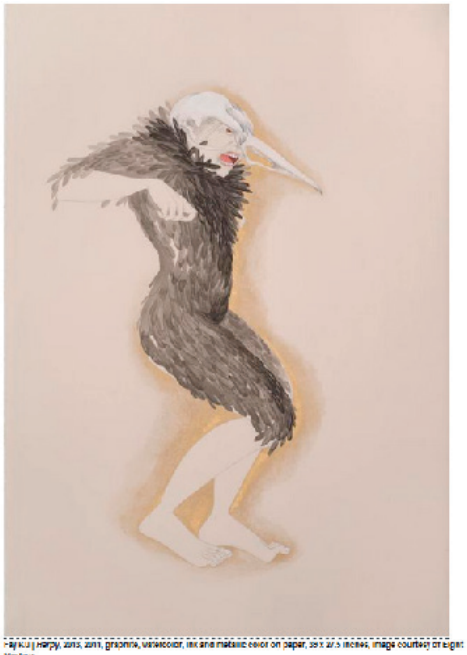


Fay Ku | *Local Weather*, 2011, graphite, watercolor and ink on paper, 27.5 x 39 inches, image courtesy of Eight Modern



Fay Ku | Bird Flight, 2013, 2011, graphite, watercolor and ink on paper, 27.5 x 39 inches, image courtesy of Eight Modern

The exhibition title is a reference to Italian director Federico Felini's cinematic masterpiece, *8 ½* in which the protagonist Guido recalls a scene from his childhood. In the movie, "Asa Nisi Masa" is an invented word, (similar to what Americans would consider Pig Latin) chanted by children at midnight with the hopes of bringing a wall portrait to life. The subtraction of the syllables "sa","si", and "sa" from "Asa Nisi Masa" (respectively) reveals the Italian word *anima*, which translates as 'soul' or 'life force,' and is further derived from the verb *animare* as 'to animate' or 'to give life.' Ku's work imbues a kind of unspoken power — both visually and psychologically speaking; the various depictions are at once unsettlingly beautiful and whimsically bizarre, but regardless, all seem poised to literally leap off the page.



Fay Ku | Harpy, 2013, 2013, graphite, watercolor, ink and metallic color on paper, 39 x 27.5 inches, image courtesy of Eight Modern



Fay Ku | Man or Child, 2012, graphite, watercolor and ink on paper, 27.5 x 39 inches, image courtesy of Eight Modern



Detail | Prey, 2013 graphite, watercolor and ink on paper 56 x 27.5 inches

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Detail | Three, 2011, graphite, watercolor, ink and embellishment on paper, 15 x 22.5 inches

Her meticulous line work speaks to an exceptional degree of skill and precision, but surprisingly upon closer inspection, erasures and imperfections become faintly visible. Various appendages, body positions and expressions show evidence of tweaking. The subtle changes in the articulation of gesturing fingers and toes reinforce the delicate nature of her craft. Ku admits that she makes no attempt to hide these marks as they help define her process. These finished works become the direct result of her exploration of the image making process, without preconceptions of what the final piece will look like. Even the decision to use printmaking paper, a medium not necessarily ideally suited for drawing (as the surface abrades and marks easily), serves as an obstruction of sorts, allowing her to be more objective and deliberate in her mark making while challenging her artistic approach.



Detail | Rain or Shine, 2012, graphite, watercolor and ink on paper, 27.5 x 30 inches



Detail | Women and Seven-Headed Beast, 2013, graphite, watercolor and ink on paper, 37.5 x 55 inches

Asa Nisa Masa is on view through July 14th.

Fay Ku has an M.S. in Art History and an M.F.A. in Studio Art from the Pratt Institute. She also holds a dual B.A. in literature and visual arts from Bennington College. Ku has been awarded numerous residencies from organizations such as the New York Foundation for the Arts, the Santa Fe Art Institute, the National Performance Network, the University of Nevada-Las Vegas and the Bemis Center for Contemporary Art. Currently based in Brooklyn, the artist has also received grants from the New York Foundation for the Arts, the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation, the A.I.R. Emerging Artist Fellowship, the National Performance Network and the Urban Artists Initiative. Her work resides in the collections of the Asian American Art Centre in New York, The Contemporary Museum in Hawaii, the New Britain Museum of American Art and the University of New Mexico Art Museum.

Claude Smith is an arts administrator and educator based in Albuquerque.

Slash/Paris
2012

Fay Ku



Fay Ku, Audition, 2010

Les dessins de Fay Ku délivrent un monde fantasque et troublant. Derrière une grande habileté technique et une beauté presque décorative, ambiguïté et violence se révèlent à travers des portraits et des scènes imaginaires troublantes aux influences et inspirations multiples. Le style et les sujets de cette jeune artiste sont en effet nourris des contes traditionnels de la culture chinoise de son enfance, mais s'inspirent également du monde contemporain et des différents pays et cultures qu'elle explore lors de ses nombreuses résidences. Les personnages, principalement féminins, sont à la fois vulnérables et agressifs, tantôt victimes et tantôt bourreaux. La nature est personnalisée et les sujets se fondent à un décor doué d'intentions. A la simplicité du trait de crayon, qui constitue la base et la force de son travail, Fay utilise l'aquarelle, l'encre, et parfois le collage pour créer un ensemble riche et coloré où se mêlent les thèmes du corps, de la féminité, de l'enfance et du conte.

Née en 1974 à Taipei, Fay Ku a reçu un Master of Fine Arts du Pratt Institute de New York en 2006. Elle vit et travaille à Brooklyn. L'exposition Outliers à la galerie L MD en septembre 2009 était sa première exposition en France. Après une exposition personnelle au New Britain Museum of American Art (Connecticut, USA) à l'été 2009, son travail a été exposé au printemps 2010 au Contemporary Museum d'Honolulu ainsi qu'au Salon du dessin contemporain à Paris. Elle a exposé en groupe à la Heidi Cho gallery pendant l'été 2010 et à la Sam Lee gallery à Los Angeles en début d'année 2011.

39, rue Chapon
75003 PARIS
+33 (0)1 48 06 67 38
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Los Angeles Times
February 3, 2011...

Los Angeles Times

Culture Monster

ALL THE ARTS, ALL THE TIME

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Art review: Fay Ku at Sam Lee

FEBRUARY 3, 2011 | 5:00 PM



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"Half Breeds," the title of Fay Ku's stirring show at Sam Lee, refers to two kinds of hybrid: the cross-species creature common to myth, and the hyphenated American. Born in Taipei and raised in the U.S. (she lives now in Brooklyn), Ku conjures up the frictions inherent to both types in drawings of uncommon fluidity. Ku's line has urgency, grace, dynamism and an animate, tensile strength. It brings to mind a mixed ancestry of its own, borrowing from Japanese woodcuts, classic fairy-tale illustration and perhaps even the high-contrast linearity of ancient Greek vase painting.

The most arresting works are drawn in gold on large sheets of black paper. "Owl Hunt II" (50½ by 59½ inches) shows a magnificent woman warrior, fiercely beautiful and epically tough, conquering a swarm of demonic owls with human faces. In gorgeous calligraphic line, Ku stages a scene that merges the theatrical and ornamental. Like all of her drawings, the image is mildly disturbing, invoking a violation of the presumed natural order.

In another fascinating piece, human and animal collide with some sort of dark, strategic intent, as grasshoppers lay their white, rice-like eggs in the hair and ear and knee-crook of a goddess of sorts, the human queen to an insect hive of fertile workers. Sexual hybridity charges this scene, and also "Lust Garden," while "Assimilation" pictures a kind of self-imposed mutilation: Two mermaids bloodily split their tails to blend in with the two-legged, sacrificing one identity to lay claim to another. They mentor a second, pre-op pair, innocents succumbing to the call of the mainstream.

Not all of Ku's drawings soar. Some lapse into melodrama, and in some she dilutes the power of her pure line with efforts at texture and collage. At their best, the works are vexing visualizations of metamorphoses past and present, fictive and familiar.

-- Leah Ollman

Sam Lee Gallery, 990 N. Hill St. #190, (323) 227-0275, through Feb. 19. Closed Sunday through Tuesday. http://www.samleegallery.com/

Image: Fay Ku, "Owl Hunt II," Sam Lee Gallery

alibi.com

http://alibi.com/art/24581/article.html

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Alibi
Vol. 18, No. 48 | November 26 – December 2, 2009

Gallery Review

The Way of Ku

Fay Ku's *Double Entendre* at Eight Modern

By Julia Mandeville



Fay Ku, "Mermaid," graphite, watercolor and ink on paper

If art is a means of artistic dialogue, consider artist Fay Ku fluent. *Double Entendre*, her solo exhibition at Eight Modern in Santa Fe, features nine recent works on paper. The majority are drawn and painted in variations of graphite, ink and watercolor. Two of the pieces are lithographs, the breathtaking results of Ku's November residency at the Tamarind Institute in Albuquerque. Altogether, the collection communicates incongruous concepts – purity/eroticism, solitude/association, fulfillment/affliction, elegance/disgrace – as balancing counterparts.



Fay Ku, "Sea Bed," graphite, watercolor and ink on paper

The beauty of Ku's aesthetic is startling, as are the natures of her subjects and the acts she depicts. At first, it feels as though these elements – like the concepts Ku deals with – are intensely at odds with one another. But as one engages the work, it becomes clear that any initial bewilderment comes not from a sense of conflict, but from an unusual sense of equilibrium.

In "Fish Sticks," three androgynous boys perform provocative deeds with members of the Pisces class as tools. Rendered in graphite, watercolor and ink on paper, each boy conveys a distinct emotion – disdain, ambivalence and intrigue. There's a ruthless lightness to the piece, in Ku's technique and presentation, that leaves a trace of entitlement. Through their expressions, subject matter, the

actors are children and therefore endowed with innocence. They are mischievous, to be sure, but they are not guilty. Indeed, something about their experimentation seems universal, a representation of our collective and constant cycle of regression and evolution.

Ku achieves parity between subject and style. In "Sea Bed," the protagonist is a woman, a character who appears starkly modern. She is nude, washed by the bed of fish on which she lies. Her visible ear reveals multiple piercings; nearly every appendage bears a ring or bracelet. Her face and form betray a distinctly contemporary indifference. Yet the style — the singular focus of the composition and the fluidity of Ku's pencil — and brush — strokes — brings to mind traditional Chinese scroll painting. Through this particular fusing of imagery and aesthetic, Ku causes a reverberation within the viewer; it's exquisite and memorable.

> **Their experimentation seems universal, a representation of our collective and constant cycle of regression and evolution.**

Prior to her November residency at Tamarind, the Brooklyn–based Ku noted that her work would likely "lend itself quite well to printmaking." As it turns out, the translation is stunning. The product of two weeks' collaboration with **Master Printer Bill Lagattuta**, Ku's premier lithographs seem a natural and vibrant extension of her previous works on paper. The editions of "Sea Change" and "Mermaid in Flight," both of which debut at *Double Entendre*, are comprised of 20 numbered (available) impressions each. These works represent an arduous, but profoundly productive, two weeks in Albuquerque.

"Mermaid in Flight" is especially fantastic. Ku's customary characters are present—human, bird, fish—in this illustration of an feathered but wretched maiden with wings of peacock feathers, a tail of fish scales and the halo of a heavenly being. "Mermaid in Flight" is an ornately designed, five-color image with a silver leaf overlay. Lithography is a process of meticulous standards, requiring the expertise and precision of a printer like Lagattuta. After he completed the chemical transfer of Ku's original image to a stone plate, Lagattuta inked and printed each color individually—registering the plate to the paper exactly, each and every time, for all of the impressions in the edition. Ku and Lagattuta's partnership is rooted in each artist's mastery of his and her form, and it's apparent; "Mermaid in Flight" and "Sea Change" are masterpieces.

> **Ku's characters are archetypes, embodiments of those incongruous concepts that exist within us.**

The scope of *Double Entendre* — relatively limited at nine works — is due to Ku's participation in numerous current exhibitions; the artist's ubiquity means that her available portfolio is restricted. But this isn't a bad thing. We are permitted to focus on each piece, to observe the relationships between them and the deviations among them, to reflect on the artist's meaning and to establish our perspective on the work.

Ku's characters are archetypes, embodiments of those incongruous concepts that exist within us. After emigrating from Taiwan to America at age 3, Ku grew up in a world where her familial heritage and cultural surroundings often clashed. Though this circumstance was personally isolating (by the artist's description), it might well be responsible for her work's intense revelation. Ku demonstrates a formidable insight into the human condition—one in which, ultimately, we are solitary beings defined by disperate influences. Luckily, her remarkable talent can handle the task of communicating this experience, allowing everyone to take part.

Ivy Ku: Double Entendre

Show runs through Jan. 1, 2010
Eight Modern
231 Delgado Street, Santa Fe
eightmodern.net
ivyku.com

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Santa Fe Reporter
November 25, 2009...



The Wife Aquatic

Fay Ku isn't dead, she just sleeps with the fishes

November 25, 2009, 12:00 am
By John Pantas

Double Entendre, Fay Ku's exhibition at Eight Modern, is a crowd-pleaser. Or maybe just a crowd-teaser. Or maybe I'm a pervert. Whichever it is, I was left wanting more, both for the beauty of the art and, at only six drawings, the brevity of the show.

The unadorned figurative works nimbly fulfill the trifecta of contemporary drawing. They are well-crafted, narratable and sort of naughty. I found myself nodding my head at her line work, scratching my head at her motives and shaking my head at her lascivious subjects.

It is obvious that Ku can draw, but her craft never devolves into showiness. On the contrary, her compositions might be described as restrained or inhibited, if not for all the commotion. She renders the forms with thin, curving contours, using just the faintest flicks to denote a fold in the flesh. For the most part, the subjects' limbs and torsos lack texture or detail, but Ku's subtle watercolor washes warm the bodies, providing a sense of weight.

The large sheets of paper remain mostly empty, leaving the figures floating in off-white voids independent of gravity or architecture. The relationship to Asian woodblock prints is unmistakable, with its economy of line and sparse compositions, but the provocative imagery is a far cry from some Katsushika Hokusai desk calendar. Ku's protagonists are all alone, and the lack of supervision is starting to get to them. It might be said that they lack perspective.

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75003 PARIS
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Santa Fe Reporter
...November 25, 2009

Art historical references aside, she was reminded of a less academic tradition: these kids who sit and doodle through all their non-art classes, defacing their desks and weirding everybody out. Certainly Ku's graphic style would find approval among the comic-book crowd, as would the graphic content. Indeed, most of these drawings would land Ku in detention.

After reading an interview with the artist, she seems to fit the bill. She is a self-described loner with a compulsion to make art. In a telling moment, she was asked what advice she had for up-and-coming artists. She replied, "Don't become an artist unless you have to," implying that her art helps her cope with what, I'm not sure, but it doesn't seem too happy in there.

Several of the works depict figures in sexually suggestive poses, often children, often with non-human animals. Though the figures are typically nude, the subject matter is never explicit. Erogenous zones are either turned away from the viewer or covered—and by covered I mean sucked by a fish.

Strangely, except for one little boy in the work "Fish Sticks," the figures derive little pleasure from their aquatic entertainment. The twin drawings "Sea Bed" and "Nibble" depict the same adult female lying prone with an expression of utter indifference among schools of fish,
as though the phalanx of fins swarming at her nethers is starting to get boring.

The show's title, Double Entendre, implies a tension between what is said and what is meant. Indeed, the innocuous titles do give way to jarring imagery, as though these ideas spring forth from Ku's brain at the mildest provocation. This is a fairly sophomoric approach to content—and there is nothing I dislike more than when I feel someone is trying to be shocking—but the psychological weight of Ku's subjects feels genuine. The images recall moments of sexual excitement that predate our understanding of sexuality and the ways in which these events can develop into fully formed fetishes that defy our understanding of sexuality.

Also new on the west wall of the gallery is Ku's punch line, "Mermaid," a fish/woman hybrid born not of myth but of perversion. Is it just me, or is the artist being evil?

Double Entendre
Through Dec. 31
Skyler Modern
232 Delgado St.
505-995-0232

New Bretain Herald
May 6, 2009...

Brooklyn artist exhibits haunting works at museum

By JENNIFER ABEL
Staff writer | Posted: Wednesday, May 6, 2009 12:00 am

NEW BRITAIN — Disturbingly beautiful, beautifully disturbing, just plain bizarre … any of those phrases could describe the half-dozen graphite, ink and watercolor paintings of Fay Ku, whose self-titled exhibit is the latest showing in the New Britain Museum of American Art's NEW/NOW series, which focuses on upcoming artists.

The Taiwanese-born Ku now lives in Brooklyn, New York, but will be in New Britain today for the NEW/NOW opening reception from 5:30 to 7 p.m. However, the pictures themselves are already on display, and will remain up through the end of July. Ku chatted about her pictures and what they mean to her, though she was careful to specify that art means different things to different people, and viewers are welcome to draw their own interpretations from Ku's images.

"I think — this was not conscious," Ku said. "A lot of Asian art is symbolic."

The first picture you're likely to see upon walking into the NEW/NOW exhibit is titled "Burden Lightens Piecemeal." It shows a nude woman wrapped in black ropes, staggering under the weight of a corpse tied to her back. Upon closer inspection, you realize the ropes are actually the woman's own braided hair binding her to her gruesome burden. The corpse leaves a thin trail of blood behind it, which in turn attracts a flock of crows feasting upon the blood and the body.

"It means more than one thing," Ku said of the image. "It's like in dreams, when a person can be your boyfriend and your brother at the same time … I got the idea after researching funerary practices in some parts of China. If you're a child or an unmarried woman … you are not buried. They leave your body in a field and burn torches to attract crows."

Ku also recalled reading a fictionalized account of famed Siamese (conjoined) twins Chang and Eng.

"The book begins when Chang wakes up and his brother is dead. He realizes it's only a matter of time before he dies, too." And the picture might have a bit of pure psychology mixed in with its meaning: "She's carrying someone who looks like her. Symbolically, it's a part of her … sometimes you have your own issues, your own baggage, and you can't let it go even though it harms you."

Kitty-corner to "Burden" hangs the 2008 image "See What You Do." It shows a woman wearing a dress made of peacock feathers; her dress is the only spot of color in a black-and-white forest. Closer to the picture, you realize that the trees are covered in eyeballs rather than branches and knots. The woman is covering her own eyes with one hand, while with the other she holds a knife and is poking out one of the tree eyes.

"There's a couple things going on," Ku observed. "I produced that when I was away from home and unhappy."

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"This was [also] during the 2008 election. It's not a political piece, but I thought about politics when I did it, all the things we've done the last eight years, how tragic it is we didn't even see the harm we did. She has a dagger but she can't see what she does with it … The eyes in the trees also remind me of how we're always under surveillance."

The single most colorful piece in the gallery is "Keep Your Demons in Check." It shows three small children in bright clothes, but each child's black-and-white "shadow" has its face twisted in a nasty way. On second thought, glancing again at the colorful children, you realize their own faces aren't particularly welcoming; they don't look like nice kids at all. Ku agreed.

"They've never really been children, in a sense," Ku said. In the Renaissance, there were pictures of Baby Jesus with a much older, adultlike facial expression; Ku said the children in her picture are in no way analogous to Jesus, but she liked the idea of children with adult faces and eyes.

"My view of children isn't idyllic," she said. "They're not as civilized, they're less in control of their emotions, more fraught with fears."

"NEW/NOW: Fay Ku" will be at the New Britain Museum of American Art, 56 Lexington St., through July 26. The opening reception is today from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Artist's remarks with Fay Ku scheduled for 6 p.m. Admission to the reception and the exhibit is free with museum admission.

Jennifer Abel can be reached at jabel@ctcentral.com or by calling (860) 225-4601, ext. 306.

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Fay Ku

by **Jonathan Goodman**

Kips Gallery
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March 6 to April 5



Fay Ku, Scorn 2007 graphite, watercolor, ink on paper, 38 X 50 inches Courtesy The Artist

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When Fay Ku was a child, her parents used to tell her fairy tales with horrible rather than happy endings—it was their way of introducing their daughter to the dangers of the world. Ku, who moved to America from Taiwan at the age of three to be with her parents (her grandmother had raised her after birth), responded sensitively to the troubled narratives her parents entertained her with: she became an artist whose work incorporates children and adolescents in situations that emphasize the sheer strangeness of childhood. Not unlike the fantastic, whimsical artist Henry Darger, Ku refers to a mindset populated by children who undermine confidence in the world as it is. She prefers to present disturbing tableaux, in which young girls pull each other's hair or regurgitate snakes, so that the scenes become meditations on transgressions that make no sense, that seem to come out of nowhere.

Ku is invested in secrets, the kind of intimacy that occurs when something private is told privately. It is an intensely female world, whose idiosyncratic habits do not lack for aggression. The viewer hopes for a key to the eccentricities of the imagery, but none is offered—we must make sense of the uncanny aggression Ku's subjects submit to. While not all the girls are engaging in destructive activities, even the supposedly benign drawings emphasize exotic situations, with the girls' bodies caricatured in poses that are humanly impossible to carry off. For example, in *Secret* (2007) two attractive young women are head to head, transmitting secrets—the figure on the right cups her hand to her ear in order to hear better. Both figures are being violated by sexless personages—we do not see their faces—who wear striped clothing and seem to peer at the subjects' genitals. Regularly, Ku invites us into a world where nothing seems right.

Sometimes the images deliberately seek provocation—in the erotic sense, where the young women are both vulnerable and sexually available. In *Nightcrawlers*(2007) a naked post-adolescent girl, lying on a bed, is covered with large worms; they are attracted to her breast (which she also covers with her hand) and her sex, hiding the pubis. A worm is found at her lips and in her hair, and the figure's expression is troubled, as if she were enduring her condition for the sake of someone else. The masochism becomes even more apparent in *Thorny* (2007), in which a nude young woman remarkably like Ku herself is enveloped in thorns, which wrap her hands, enter her mouth, and curl under to her genitals. These two images both suggest psychological as well as physical pain, yet we don't know why the artist has portrayed her subjects as she does; the enigma of their existence turns on the experience of suffering, but the vivid conundrums of Ku's drawings show only the effect and not the cause.

One of the more affecting drawings pictures a young girl with a short haircut, in a print blouse and shorts, walking off toward the left. Titled *Didn't Feel a Thing*(2005), the subject has left five bloody footprints; her right foot is steeped in blood. The young girl's profile reveals a somber demeanor, while the title of the work only emphasizes her predicament. Again, pain is key to the painting. In general, Ku's art is excruciating to the point where it doesn't make sense, resulting in a surrealism whose physical aches stand in for another kind of suffering. Although Ku describes girls and young women in raw circumstances, the hurt seems to be self-induced. This poses a seemingly intractable puzzle: Why should they do this to themselves? The answer to the mystery isn't all that clear, but what results is an extraordinary range of scenarios whose close familiarity border on frankness. We may not know the secrets, but nonetheless we are taken in by them; our bemusement results from the girls' unsolvable quandaries.