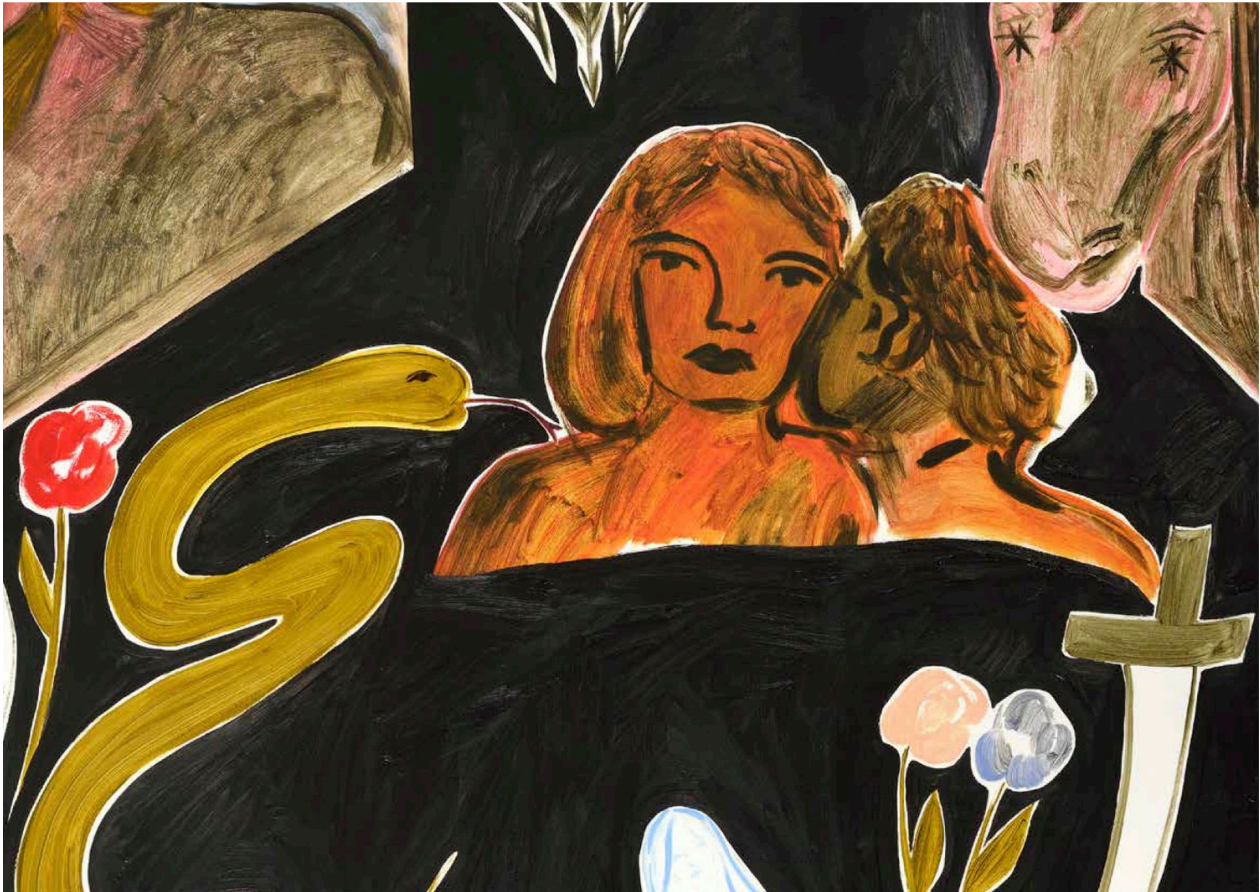


PETRIE MISINTERPRETATION

ANEMONES AND LOVERS. THE ART OF FAYE WEI WEI



Details of *Anemones and Lovers*, 2017
Artwork by Faye Wei Wei

Since graduating from Slade School of Fine Art in 2016, Faye Wei Wei has had a whirlwind of a year – group shows, a New York residency at HOY HOY, and expeditions in Japan. Her début, *Anemones and Lovers* at The Cob Gallery, in her native London, presents a selection of the paintings Wei Wei has produced over the years.

In a romantic white tiered dress, reminiscent of one of her painting's protagonist, Faye Wei Wei floats through clusters of private view invitees. The contemporary expanse of the Cob Galley, not only overflows with Wei Wei paintings, effervescent in their medieval quality, but of the young artists' supportive friends, family, and fellow Slade School alumni. In this way, *Anemones and Lovers* is a homecoming for the British artist.

Wei Wei credits the last year for teaching her to trust herself more when producing work: "I make the work when I need to," she notes. It is this instinctual approach to creating that makes Wei Wei's work even more interesting. Her paintings are poetic streams of (sub)consciousness. Every canvas, framed or unframed, bares her artistic signature. Each piece is a poetic facet, with its own intricacy, point of view, and myth to explore. Wei Wei's paintings are organic, free-flowing, and rhythmic. Each brush stroke – tentative or definite, faint or hue-drenched – adds to the work's poetic quality, all whilst evidencing the painting's organic conception.

“I think the messages come out when I’m making the work. I’ll begin with a feeling in mind, a line from a poem or something I’m just thinking about. I’ll see what I’m drawn to... these faces will just kind of appear. Symbols like seashells, swans, snakes, fans, and things. Fountains and lovers... these things all come together while I’m painting. Then I find the paintings kind of say things to me,” Faye Wei Wei reveals.



I Know a Type of Sadness That Smells of Pineapples, 2016.
Artwork by Faye Wei Wei

In the Foreword of the *Anemones and Lovers* catalogue, Ronjooy Dam notes that, as a child, Wei Wei would memorise entire poems and that lyrical fragments fill the pages of her notebooks. Poetry and the young artist are innately intertwined. Wei Wei even speaks with a subtle poetic intonation. It is this infatuation with poetic verse which has seeped into the faintest of brush strokes, culminating in the uniquely rhythmic quality of Wei Wei’s work.

Collectively, *Anemones and Lovers* explores ideas of masculinity and femininity through myths and religious iconography. In each painting, Wei Wei ambiguously toys with fairy-tale and reality. The dualities explored are most obvious in the repeated symbols: snakes and thorns, sea urchins and lioness. One could interpret this as a tusk between worlds. Sea urchins are bound to the sea, whilst lionesses are bound to land. Snakes roam the ground whilst thorns reach for the sky. These dualities are the organic outpouring of Wei Wei’s subconscious, only to be identified in the physical realm on canvas.

As Faye Wei Wei thoughtfully observes her own work during our brief conversation, she reveals: “There is quite a lot of darkness in the work sometimes. A lot of questioning about love and of fairy-tales. Those sort of ancient fairy-tales and myths have a lot of betrayal in them. Some of the figures look quite sad, like they’re holding secrets or are stuck in a love triangle.”

When asked what she would like people to take away from *Anemones and Lovers*, Faye Wei Wei states simply: “My joy for painting and to see all the love that I put into every painting.” This is a sentiment that permeated the gallery space, and one that I certainly took with me.

Faye Wei Wei’s debut, *Anemones and Lovers*, is at The Cob Gallery from 13th April until 29th April.

Words: Jamal George-Sharpe
Copy edited by Elena Stanciu