

AnOther

Art & Photography / Who, What, Why

Love, Symbolism and Mythology in the Work of Faye Wei Wei

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The London-based painter invites us into her studio as her debut exhibition opens at Camden's Cob Gallery

Who? Faye Wei Wei is the passionate and precocious British Chinese artist breathing new life into the field of painting. Born in 1994 in south London, she recently graduated from the Slade School of Fine Art, where she finetuned the formal figurative training which underwrites her work with a classically influenced modern symbolism. At school, the majority of Wei Wei's classrooms had been dominated by boys, she explains, and she found herself criticised for her feminine approach; fortunately, this appraisal only served to drive a bolder and more rigorous ownership of her aesthetic and identity when she reached university. A romantic soul, with a vivid and poetic memory, Wei Wei's sensual exploration of myth and love has a new generation in rapture.

What? Wei Wei's home studio is a cornucopia of emotion and expression; it's littered with art books dedicated to Fra Angelico and Cy Twombly, the poetry of Sappho and Blake, yellowed newspaper cuttings, old books on ancient history, a collection of seashells and tokens, and piles of sketches and notebooks full of lyrical fragments and dreams. Viewed altogether, this amalgamation of objects becomes an intoxicating exploration of love through the ages.

Wei Wei embraces worldly myth-making for a modern era; in her hands, many references mingle before being poured out onto sensuous large-scale canvases. Stylistically, her work is composed of translucent layers, powerful brush-strokes and instinctive mark-making. "Working with large canvases means painting feels like a performance, the movement of painting is like a dance, so much is intuitive," she tells AnOther. "It takes physical and emotional strength."

Symbolism is key, here, but it's also deeply personal: Wei Wei creates a tapestry of snakes and suns, mirrors and Madonnas, boys and boxers, girls and lionesses, to form paintings which feel like a foreign and familiar mystery. "I feel like I'm telling secrets to my paintings sometimes," she confides, "but they will always stay silent for me."



Artwork by Faye Wei Wei

Why? *Anemones and Lovers* is Faye Wei Wei's debut exhibition, and it opens at the Cob Gallery today. She describes it as being "made up of figures floating within a luminous sea of oil paint," and the show marks the arrival of the young artist. You can't help but feel that she manages to conjure a modern alchemy from antiquity. "Painting is magic," she concludes, dreamily, "and some things should remain unfinished..."

Anemones and Lovers runs until April 29, 2017 at The Cob Gallery, London.