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Art Talk: Interview with New York Artist Wendy White

By Jessie Bryson
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Wendy White is an artist based in New York City. Having shown in galleries and museums throughout the US, Europe, and Japan, she will be showing in China for the first time in a [group show that opens today \(Oct 29\) and runs](#) through January 25 at [M Woods](#) in the 798 Arts District. Here, Wendy takes a moment to answer a few questions for the Beijinger about her work, the show, and what she looked forward to most on her first visit to Beijing.



This group show is titled *Full of Peril and Weirdness: Painting as a Universalism*. The roster includes over 20 artists, each using the medium of painting to invoke experiences, obsessions, and associations. What was the most important thing for you to convey in this show? Do you expect your work to be received in a certain way here in China [versus in Europe, or America]?

My work is very content-driven. I'm always looking for a balance between whatever concept I'm tackling and a level of aesthetic originality – I want my paintings to surprise the viewer. I definitely think art shifts in meaning depending on its context, and I'm curious to see how it is interpreted in China.

I love that your work seeks inspiration from nontraditional topics such as alpine skiing, graffiti, and European football leagues. But my favorite references invoke your neighborhood of Chinatown in New York. What is it about Chinatown that fascinates you so much?

My neighborhood, and the Lower East Side in general, is one of the last in NYC to retain a truly individual character. When I first moved to Chinatown in 2007 I was struck by the bits of history that were still visible. You can see and feel the accumulation of architectural changes and signage styles. It's busy yet family-oriented and relaxed in a way. It's really inspiring to live in a neighborhood where the language and customs are preserved so ambitiously.



Speaking of one's surroundings, the concept of space is interpreted so differently in China than it is in the Western world – whether it be public space, urban space, gallery space, or personal space. You use these concepts of space quite a lot in your work, don't you?

Most of my work is site-specific in some way. I'm really into paintings as objects rather than depictions of things. Paintings take up two- and three-dimensional space. I lean paintings against the wall, hang them low, and allow them to interact with other objects such as sculptures and floor treatments. My last solo show in the US (at Sherrick and Paul in Nashville) dealt with personal space as an outdated domestic notion. I've always been more interested in working with, rather than fighting against, the architecture of a space.

So this will be your first time in China! What are you looking forward to the most?

I'm super excited about the exhibition and to see the 798. I'm also looking forward to giving a lecture at The Central Academy of Fine Arts. I love the chance to art students in international cities and I hope to have the chance to see what they're making in their studios. Mostly, I can't wait to be in a part of the world I've never seen, and I'm definitely curious to see if it feels at all like home [in the Lower East Side].

Full of Peril and Weirdness: Painting as a Universalism is curated by Robin Peckham and features a roster of over 20 international artists from 10 countries across the Americas, Asia, and Europe. The show spotlights a network of artists that represent the genre of modern day painting, in contrast to more standard shows that focus on artists from Europe and North America. Using painting as a method to explore the current state of our world today, plus borrowing the title from a piece of writing in China's ancient art history, the show is a fantastic merging of East and West, old and new, abstract and material...and of course: Peril and Weirdness.

Full of Peril and Weirdness: Painting as a Universalism opens today (Oct 29) at M Woods and runs through January 25, 2016.

Photos courtesy of Wendy White