

獅子沒精神

The Listless Lion (2017)

Chinese ink, gouache, ball pen, acrylic, coloured pencil on paper
36 x 104 cm each (Set of 2 pieces)

Joey Leung was born July 17, 1976. In 2000, she completed her bachelor of Fine Arts Degree at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and eventually received her M.F.A. in 2007 at the same institution. Leung's first solo exhibition *Idling Away a Second* was featured in the Galerie Martin. Her first debut in the year 2000 came after winning the prestigious Y.S. Hui Arts Award the same year for her three-dimensional mixed media work [1]. Leung's most recent solo exhibition *Unpoetic Poems* in 2014 was featured in the Grotto Fine Art gallery, also located in Hong Kong. Her works have been widely purchased by private collectors and have been collected in Institutions such as the Hong Kong Museum of Art and the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford University (UK)[2].

Leung's recognition has been thanks to her peculiar art style. She combines traditional Chinese painting with a more contemporary flare of popular culture. Her use of the fine line technique (*gongbi*) is distinguished by meticulous brushwork and is accentuated with a colourful palette [3]. Pushing the boundaries of conventional styles, she has mixed diverse methods of media and has integrated her feelings and fantasy to create her own interpretations of modern life [4]. In the work *The Listless Lion (2017)*, different mediums of Chinese ink, gouache, ball pen, and acrylic successfully blend together to create a harmonious effect in the artwork.

Her cartoonish and eccentric style is characterized by the use of female legs posing as mountains. The bent knees give the sense of mountainous elevation, and the red toenails are a small detail that contrast the predominant white and green hues of the designs on the legs. Seven pairs of legs spread across the entire work, which create an almost abstract and extremely imaginative representation of Kowloon. Each pair has a unique pattern and design, yet all contain images of flora found in the nation. The legs are also positioned in different angles, suggesting an arrange of mountain peaks. The use of feminine figures in her work gives a nod to the importance of female representation in the art scene of Hong Kong; regardless of the modernization and availability of opportunity, women yet remain underrepresented in the world of fine arts.

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the painting is the lion resting atop the legs in the center. By placing the lion in the middle of the art piece, Leung draws the attention of the viewer to the comical way of symbolizing Lion's Rock. A rough translation from her inscriptions reads "Lion says absolutely can not!; if I leave this mountain; the city will have no spirit". It celebrates the culture of the Hong Kong people, and by intertwining such a strong ethnic landmark with her own perception of the world around her, Leung transcribes her national pride into her work.

The use of two sets of papers to create a long horizontal image, paralleling how traditional ink painters presented their works on long scrolls [5]. The elongated image splits the emphasis of the painting into two different parts. The contrast between the two panels creates a chronological sequencing for the viewer, guiding the eyes from the left side and following the fluid-like motion of the hair, to end at the most colourful corner of the painting. The flowing black hair at the bottom of the painting resembles a body of water. At the furthestmost left end of the painting, the bright golden scissors add colour to the predominantly dark lower end of the panel, and bring light to the viewer's eyes. The scissors trimming away the black hair could portray a need to physically cut ties: during the past few years, the Lion Rock spirit has become a modernized representation of the socio-political aspirations of the nation to strive for justice and real social equality [6].

To finish off her work, Leung adds an inscription. Traditional inscription are often devoid of humor, as they are typically profound excerpts intended to further the context of the artwork to the viewer. The intentions in this work are similar, but her use of print-like characters is much more modernized compared to the traditional cursive form. The Cantonese inscriptions in this piece are more like limericks and are meant to be sang aloud, since the meticulous choice of words rhyme and have a musical flow to them [7].

The work more interestingly focuses on the human perspective of natural landscapes. This makes the art piece unique, and refreshingly compels the audience look at nature through a different lens. Leung effectively drives the audience's attention to the human personification of natural phenomenon. The artist is invigorating and unafraid to challenge conviction, and exemplifies how versatile art can become when taking inspiration from traditional techniques.



[1] "Joey Leung Ka-Yin: Idling Away a Second." Search | Joey Leung Ka-Yin: Idling Away a Second | Asia Art Archive, Asia Art Archive, www.aaa.org.hk/en/collection/search/library/joey-leung-ka-yin-idling-away-a-second/search/keyword:event-solo-exhibition-solo-show/page/1/view_as/row.

[2] "Joey, Leung Ka-Yin." Art Projects Gallery, www.artprojectsasia.com/Joey-Leung-Kayin-Biography.html

[3] "LEUNG, Ka-Yin, Joey." Grotto Contemporary Hong Kong Art, Grotto Fine Art Ltd., www.grottofineart.com/joyleung.htm.

[4] “V&A · Chinese Gongbi Silk Painting.” Victoria and Albert Museum, www.vam.ac.uk/articles/chinese-gongbi-silk-painting.

[5] “獅子沒精神The Listless Lion .” HKUST Library, lbcone.ust.hk/exhibit/exhibition/142/artwork/3190.

[6] Chan, Y. (29 December 2014). "The New Lion Rock Spirit – How a Banner on a Hillside Redefined the Hong Kong Dream". The World Post. Retrieved 19 March 2015.

[7] Han, Christopher; Liu, June; Leung, Zachary. “Joey Leung Presentation.” 30th November, 2017. HUMA3660 Tradition and Modernity: Chinese Ink Painting in the 20th Century, HKUST. Microsoft PowerPoint Presentation