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LOUISE NEVELSON

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Wei Dong at Stefan Stux

Wei Dong was born in Chifeng, Inner Mongolia, two years into Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution (1966-76), but he is old enough to remember the effects of that massive attempt to turn back the clock. Now he lives in Hoboken, New Jersey, where he moved in 2001, in a society that champions a very different kind of anti-intellectualism and is crassly materialistic. Wei Dong's paintings unite forms and ideas culled from both East and West. They show young, voluptuous, mostly beautiful, Asian women in varying degrees of undress, sometimes retaining parts of green, blue, brown

or black uniforms of Great Leap Forward vintage. Painted with acrylic on canvas in the Socialist Realist style of the artist's schooling, these works also owe a large debt to Ingres's exquisite sense of line and surface. Like Ingres, Wei Dong explores the sensuality of the female nude with obvious erotic delight. He achieves mesmerizing pictorial ambiguity through dramatic compositions that include radical cropping and a collagelike overlapping of forms of comparable size. This leads to a telescoping of space and an accentuation of the picture plane.

Hunting (2007) arranges three women in a pyramidal composition. At the pinnacle is a woman standing fully erect; another rises from the bottom right corner and a third, sandwiched between the two, reclines with her bare legs splayed wide and eyes closed. (The other women stare out at us provocatively.) A dog seen from behind stands with its hind legs apart, resting one paw on the reclining figure, who is semi-nude. The standing woman is dressed rather dramatically in a blue cape and red stockings and garters with her genitalia exposed, holding a loaf of bread and a cane. Wearing a crown of thorns and a green coat and dangling a cigarette between her lips, the third woman holds a phallic rifle in both hands, aiming it in the direction of the reclining woman's pudendum, cropped by the

bottom edge of the painting. The ravishing visual congestion contrasts with the open sky above, lightly streaked with clouds.

Wei Dong achieves considerable sexual tension by playing drapery off naked flesh; he hints at androgyny by showing women with partly shorn heads and at pre-pubesence by exposing hairless genitalia. Fleishy mouths seem interchangeable with crunchy or juicy foodstuffs and plush toys, while the presence of dogs and other creatures may allude to animal instincts. The tension rises when he throws Christian symbolism into the mix: the bread and crown of thorns in *Hunting*, or a lamb lying on its side in *The Pastoral Song* (2007). In *Touch II* (2006), one woman thrusts her index finger into a wound in the belly of another woman, evoking Doubting Thomas. Wei Dong's conflation of such unlikely subjects recalls the freewheeling associations in works by Rosenquist, Wesselmann, Salle and Koons. However, in his mixing of old and new, East and West, communist Social Realism and capitalist Pop, he takes a stride all his own.

—Michael Amy

Wei Dong: *Hunting*, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 56 by 40 inches; at Stefan Stux.

