The Most Beautiful Times

Yuwen Wang

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Yuwen Wang
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by

Yuwen Wang

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For the Degree of Master of Fine Arts
in Imaging Arts

School of Photographic Arts and Sciences
College of Imaging Arts and Sciences
Rochester Institute of Technology
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Approval:

__________________________________________
Christine Shank                           Date
MFA Director
For the old times and the current us
ABSTRACT

*The Most Beautiful Times* is a series of narrative depicting a woman’s psychological experiences with sexual passion, in which she struggles, suffers, submits, and sacrifices. It is in these moments that profound emotions exist, which transform the meaning of her life. This body of work is both literal and metaphorical, as well as remembered and fantasized. The work is based on real experiences re-imagined in constructed images to examine the character’s internal conflicts, her loss of innocence and desire. The work explores how a story can be told through freezing performance as still frames, as well as how and to what extent a personal story can be revealed through still images, while at the same time can convey universal emotions and sensual sentiments shared by human beings.
About the Work

*The Most Beautiful Times* is a non-linear narrative depicting a woman’s psychological experiences with sexual passion, in which she struggles, suffers, submits, and sacrifices. It is in these moments that profound emotions exist, which transforms the meaning of her life.

This body of work is both literal and metaphorical, as well as remembered and fantasized. The work is based on real experiences re-imagined in constructed images to examine the character’s internal conflicts, her loss of innocence and desire. These are manifested through her performance and the environments she inhabits. Objects and environments of daily life are linked to actual events while interactions with them and alteration of the space are blended with fantasy.

The narration is based on theatrical method displayed through still images, portrayed by a recurring character acting in front of a camera. All the scenes, actions and plots are thoroughly planned ahead of the shooting. The scenes, plots and character only exist in the images, not in real life. This way of making completes the intention of the work- The character tries to come to terms with her passion and desire. The process is full of pain and struggle. I, as director, transform myself into a third person to reconstruct and reexamine unbearable memory. At the same time I, as the character existing only in that imagined realm, enable the pain to stay in those imagined spaces.

The narrative in this series is formed by the combination of actual experiences and imaginary plots and actions. The imaginary plots are my reinterpretation of and response to those past events. Objects and places are linked to memory while the interactions are fictional. For instance, the image of a broken hanger on the ground depicts an adult response to a fragment of childhood memory. The broken hanger actually happened; when it occurred it reminded me of a childhood memory—my first notion of sexuality and masturbating. When I was very little, I watched TV with my parents. I remembered my parents switching channels rapidly. When they settled on a channel, on the screen there was a woman in the bathroom, breaking a hanger and putting it into her body—I was shocked and terrified. That scene was rooted in my memory, causing my
long-term fear of sexuality. This event led to my initial impression of sexuality being self-harm and bleeding. The day the hanger accidentally fell on the floor and broke, that fear was brought back to me. From her positioning, the character is aware of the danger, but she still thinks about approaching it.

Color blocks, graphic elements and simplified environments further illustrate the illusory nature in this series and convey the fictional quality of the performance. I use the absence of details, geometric elements, and flat expressions to create a skin-flattened character in simplified environments. The resulting aesthetic shifts between concretion and abstraction. This forms a sense of timelessness in the work. The time and space of the actions are not specifically recognizable; they exist in a fantasized world. The character’s pale, flawless and flat skin further intensifies the imaginary nature of the work; it also shows the character’s fragile psyche. She is in limbo between existence and nonexistence, wandering between fiction and memory. Moreover, abstract elements in the work eliminate the unnecessary information and thus intensify the communication. In the images, the arms are pale like an inanimate object, while the red background is a passionate, psychological setup to portray a struggling emotional moment.

The title of the work *The Most Beautiful Times* appears to be contradictory to what the images are presenting—tension, violence, and submission. However, it is in these emotional moments that there is profoundness, embedding a passionate page in the character’s life. She suffers, submits and sacrifices; however, in losing herself in the passion, she is reborn anew.

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