

Frida Wannerberger: Into the Sunset with You

2023.12.5 – 2024.1.2

Curator: Wang Shiyang

Tang Contemporary Art, Beijing Headquarters Gallery Space

Tang Contemporary Art is pleased to announce "Into the Sunset with You," a solo exhibition of approximately thirty recent paintings by Swedish artist Frida Wannerberger, including her latest oil paintings on canvas completed in 2023 and a series of works on paper created between 2019 and 2021, to be held on December 5, 2023 at 4:00 pm at our Beijing Headquarters Gallery Space. The exhibition features approximately thirty recent paintings by the artist, including her most recent oil on canvas, which will be completed in 2023, and a series of works on paper, which will be created between 2019 and 2021. The exhibition is curated by Wang Shiyang.

I'm open to everything. But no sooner do you accomplish that, than you say quickly—put it away, put the pain away where it can't hurt, turn it into a story or into history. But I don't want to put it away. Yes, I know what you want me to say—that because I've rescued so much private pain—material—because I'm damned if I'll call it anything else, and "worked through it" and accepted it and made it general, because of that I'm free and strong.

Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook*

Frida Wannerberger goes beyond mere imagery and narrative; she is more like a recorder, using the most intimate clothing that adheres closely to our skin as notes to document sensitivity and scrutiny. The image of a girl with billowing sleeves becomes a narrative that showcases embodied experiences. Clothing retains traces imprinted on our bodies, from the fragrance of applied perfume to the tinge of perspiration. In contrast to the three types of clothing outlined by Roland Barthes in "The Fashion System," Frida Wannerberger's approach is dedicated to the bodily appeals and the sensory symbols shaping self-awareness. The image of clothing becomes her second skin.

Frida Wannerberger's practice of female self-construction, like the mist in London's damp climate, imparts a subtle sense of detachment. The artist's own sensitivity is woven into her works, which are both lyrical and expressive. Frida's descriptions seem purposeless on the surface but carry underlying reflections and dedication.

In the artist's memory, not too long ago, women had no more choices but to wear dresses or other forms of skirts. Frida uses the style of this clothing to pay homage to the collective history of women. This style of clothing has a rich history, with the towering shoulders and voluminous skirt styles originating from the Renaissance period. This style features rich collars and an elevated waistline, with the lower part relying on petticoats or hoop skirts to show a sense of volume, and arms adorned with sleeves that puff up, such as bubble sleeves and lotus sleeves. This Renaissance fashion undoubtedly marked a revival of attention to bodily aesthetics, using clothing cuts to emphasize the advantages of female body contours. It was also a period subject to feminist criticism for reinforcing certain beauty standards.

However, Frida Wannerberger's ultimate purpose in choosing this style of clothing is not centered on these critiques. The artist, drawing on visual memories from childhood and adolescence, uses the intricate yet quite liberated clothing as a means of expression to reject both sexualized womanhood and the male gaze. In the process of shaping identity, individual dressing behaviors are the result of constant negotiation between the personal and the societal. Frida directs her personal experiences into a symbolically expressive style of clothing, showcasing it through her artistic language. In her self-created world, the interplay between image and material environment becomes a dialogue within the realm of personal experience. This fusion brings forth a new perspective for post-feminist critique. It redirects unsettling emotions and states back into self-choice questioning. The images created by Frida are not meant for immersion. On the contrary, they break free from ingrained thought constraints, sparking imagination, and stimulating the critique of objects.

In Frida Wannerberger's works, the expressions of the girls appear innocent, and the clothing that fills the frame seems to defy gravity. Indeed, the contrast between the delicate bodies and the clothing that fills the frame creates a sense of weightlessness. Especially notable is the depiction of shoes, which, in contrast to the clothing, are often portrayed as ethereal and powerless in contact with the ground. In each isolated work, there is a sense of anticipation for self-enlightenment. The female figures constructed by Frida are not about the interconnectedness of a group. Similar to her eloquent discussions about her nuanced experiences, the descriptions no longer emphasize fixed functions but rather highlight a certain state of existence. Faced with a gendered and media-saturated environment, Wannerberger's artistic state focuses on more microscopic contexts. In the ongoing process of self-presentation, the background and characters become variables negotiated and considered.

Clothing not only serves as a symbol masking the body, but also engages with the body and incorporates it, providing both material warmth and attractiveness. In Frida's paintings, the ornamentation and details of the depicted figures, along with non-material symbols, guide the viewer's gaze in a divergent evolution. Within the realm of popular culture, after undergoing strict criticism of sensuality, Frida follows her own values, showcasing a fearless state of life. This involves confronting defined female traits with an attitude of acceptance or rejection. Frida uses blended images to pose questions to the viewer or herself. This amalgamation of classical and modern, childlike and adult images presents the essence of contemporary womanhood in an innocent and compassionate state. The definition itself is not something that demands a simple, self-contained answer, nor is it about submission to a particular set of values.

Text/Shiyang

About Artist

Frida Wannerberger (b. 1989, Sweden)'s works integrate reflections on the female identity and girlhood in a contemporary context through self-observation. In her portrait pieces, ethereal female figures adorned in elaborate clothing allow viewers to interpret the feminine qualities in her work freely, while also transforming the body into a tool for communicating ideas. The artist's living environment serves as the most influential visual inspiration, and her works focus on symbolism and visual clues, forming emotional biographical stories dominated by identity and institutions.

Frida Wannerberger has held solo exhibitions at the Haricot Gallery in London and the Kuiyuan Art Space in Shanghai. She has also participated in the 2023 Shanghai ART021 Art Fair and group exhibitions such as "Soft Core/Hard Core" (D Contemporary, London), "Inquiry to the Wall" (Tang Contemporary Art x Soul Art Center, Beijing), and "Look Mum No Hands" (9 French Place, London). Wannerberger's works have been collected by the Solo House in Stockholm.