

Raising Children for Strangers

This exhibit, sponsored by the Snite Museum of Art, the Liu Institute for Asian Studies, and the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts, features the latest work of the Asian-American artist Fay Ku. Ku's work belongs to the realm of East-West transnational art, where visual associationism and hybridity ply new forms of political collectivity. In this sense Ku produces transnational iconographic art. But Ku's works give a sense of genuine strangeness, even in their own genre. Look at these works at all and one can see their difference from East-West artwork that is overpopulated with easily recognizable icons that mark the artwork as transnational, subversive, or both. These works, commonly identified as "gimmicky," ultimately have a negative aesthetic relationship to the icon: the "gimmick" we feel is the overuse of iconography that cashes out as the easy politics of iconoclasm. The art that Ku makes doesn't just *include* icons; they summon the cosmological awe and fear of inhabiting an almost completely iconographic visual field. Her art is genuinely invested in iconography as a unique conduit for ethical sensibility, and is un-ironically continuing the work of Hieronymous Bosch, Hans Holbein, as well as Japanese ukiyo-e, Chinese nianhua, and religious devotional art from Buddhism and Christianity.

Along with Asian American women artists like Maggie Yee, Cynthia Tom, Shixue Siegel, and Chinese women artists like Bu Hua and Dong Yuan, Fay Ku works at the intersection of East and West experienced from within a female subjectivity. But her transnationalism is a specific kind. In her paintings, East-West interpollination looks nothing like a *demos* whose members are bound together by iconoclastic tastes and inclinations, shareable values, and sensations. This collectivity, the bodies that are held together in her work by Asian and western themes, icons, and styles alike, has no national (or inter-national) structures of feeling: the binding agent seems to only be a vulnerability to cosmic and/or real injury. Fay Ku's interest in hubris and harm as the common denominator of visual experience makes her transnational iconography unapologetically feminist. This exhibit is another example of Ku's strategic configuration of the human-image relationship in an increasingly aspectual and harmful world.

— Nan Da
Assistant Professor of English
University of Notre Dame



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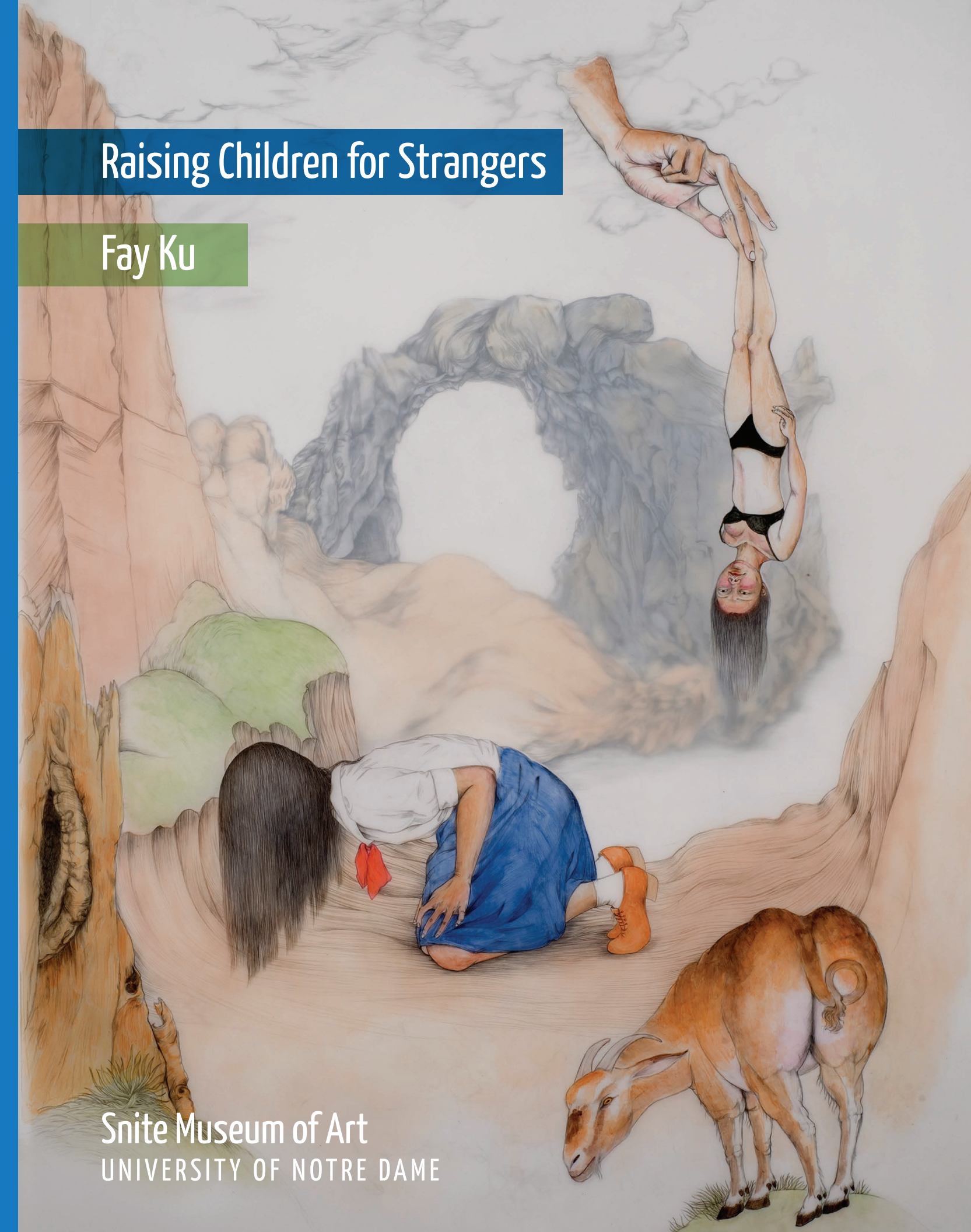
Fay Ku

1. *Before the S-Exile*, 2015
2. *Desire Is What You See Every Day*, 2015
3. *High Touch*, 2015
4. *O Great Bird in the Sky*, 2015
5. *Throne*, 2016
6. *Fontainebleau*, 2015
7. *Three Eves*, 2016

All artworks exhibited courtesy of artist Fay Ku (American, born in Taiwan 1974) and all are mixed media on polyester film.

This exhibition is presented in support of a University of Notre Dame class focusing on transnational iconography: *What We Talk about When We Talk about China*.

Snite Museum of Art
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME



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Fay Ku

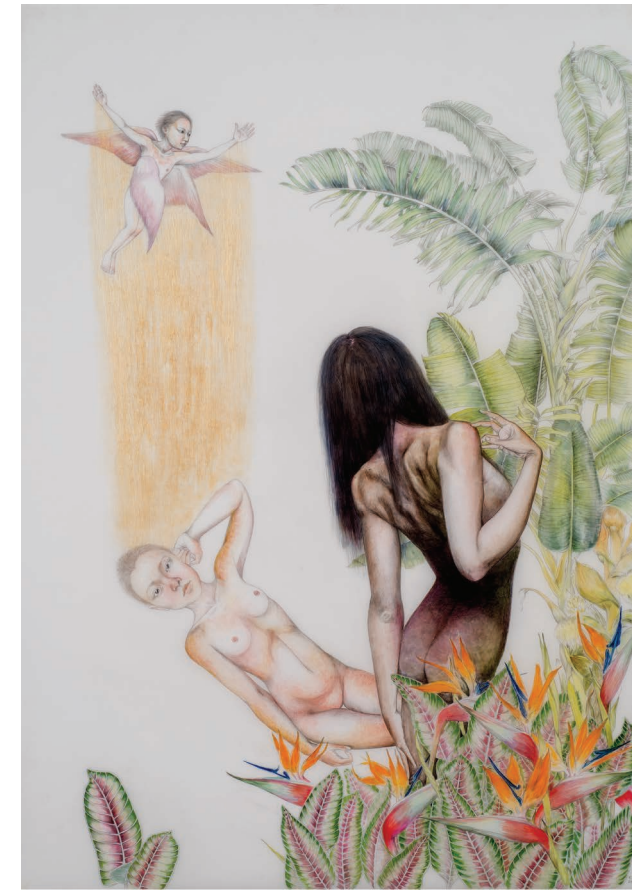
August 28 to October 23, 2016

These artworks represent both a stylistic departure from my previous body of work and the beginning of a new series where I adopt visual tropes, from both Western art and found images from social media, to create tableaux that are open-ended narratives. I am still figuring out how to talk about this work, as it's so new, but generally this new body reflects my musings on how the current generation of young people are exposed to streams of images isolated from their context, and how this parallels my childhood when things I saw were divorced from meaning or the stories I heard lacked a visual context. I think I am reconstructing my experiences as a child, the process of internalizing images and stories, and fusing them into a personal narrative/vision.

— Fay Ku



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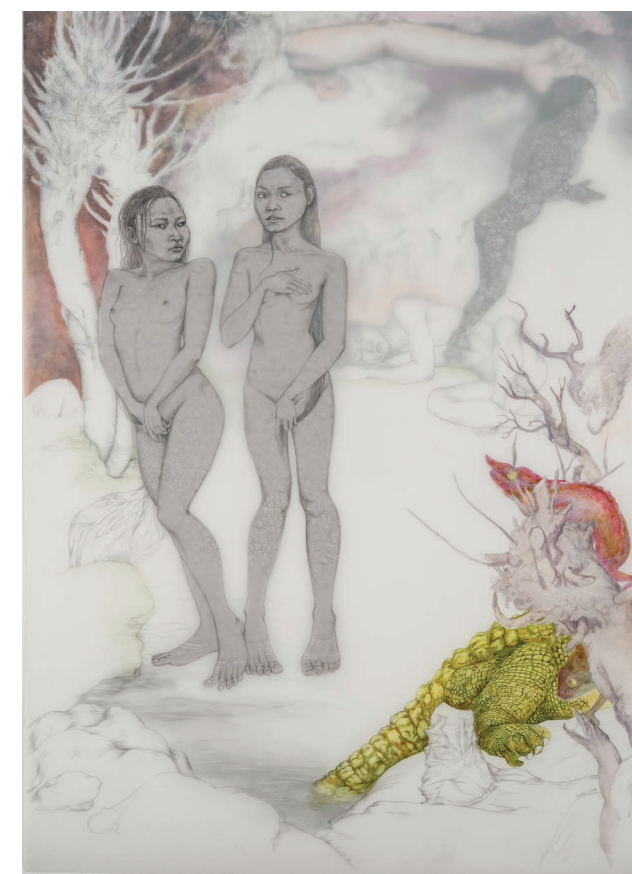
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