



Dotty Attie: *Resistance and Refusal / Boys*, 2000, oil on linen, three panels, 6 by 20 inches overall; at P.P.O.W.

camel, some groups of veiled women and imperial soldiers at their desks. The last image is a bare-breasted, dark-skinned woman who wears a wedding veil as she holds the hand of her formally dressed groom/conqueror.

Although Attie paints basically in grisaille, she will often add color to the figures to approximate old-fashioned hand-tinted photographs. She also varies the visual rhythms by sometimes putting two image panels next to each other with no intervening text. The larger sequences feature up to 18 image and 10 text panels. In some smaller sequences, Attie employs only two image panels flanking a text fragment.

Other narratives revolve around crime (the denouement is an image of the electric chair) and sports (ending in a knockout in the boxing ring). In each case, the combination of disturbing images with the last five words of the sentence packs a wallop, as the more benign sentiments hinted at in the preceding juxtapositions are revealed to have ugly underpinnings. Creating variations on a single theme, Attie encourages us to rethink the whole gamut of social relationships. In case after case, "resistance and refusal" clearly only mean consent from the perspective of the one who wields the power. —Eleanor Heartney

## Hong Lei at Chambers Fine Art

Chinese conceptualist Hong Lei is perhaps best known for his elusive photo-based works that appropriate the iconography of ancient Chinese painting. "Hong Lei's Narrative: An Alternative Beauty," the artist's first solo exhibition in the U.S., beautifully combined photography and installation to create a resonant sensory experience. Born in 1960 in Changzhou, China, Hong began as a painter, heavily influ-

enced by both Baselitz and Kokoschka. Still working in his home city, the artist has not entirely abandoned his early inclinations, but in his recent work has insightfully fused traditional Chinese motifs with Western esthetic strategies.

The exhibition, assembled by New York-based curator Shin-Yi Yang, contained approximately 20 works. Like much of Hong's oeuvre, these works are indebted to the imperial court paintings of the Song dynasty (ca. 960-1279) that seem to bristle with life. Hong's works are not idyllic; they are cynical allegories born of an ideological tension resulting from his nation's radically shifting cultural values. In a series of five photographic works, Hong appropriated landscape images from various sources and then painted over the scenes in translucent crimson. *Chinese Landscape (Zhuozheng Gardens)*, 1998, uses a photograph of a lush garden and classical Chinese architecture. The image has a washed-out, filtered tonality offset by Hong's striking—if not disturbing—hand-painted washes of blood-red ink. The skies bear red clouds, and blood seems to flow in a stream and ooze from the house's walls.

Five wood-box constructions contain tableaux with similar undercurrents. Various sized, some of the pieces are open, stagelike spaces; others, covered with glass, resemble traditional dioramas. The standout of these is *Three Flies of Yancheng City* (2003)—a small, rather regal-looking structure that contains three large, artificial flies with huge red eyes hanging from fishing wire. A photograph of a traditional-looking Chinese landscape serves as backdrop. The flies, despite their immobility, seem to dance playfully like marionettes on a stage.

Dangling from the ceiling throughout the gallery space were numerous plastic flies, perhaps a metaphor for a sickness

festering under the surface of history—a theme that seemed to permeate the entire exhibition. Hong's works succeed because of their ability to evoke a range of moods, and because of their seductive visual quality—a characteristic that contemporary artists sometimes surrender in favor of slickness and cold conceptualism.

—Derek Conrad Murray

## Takashi Murakami at Marianne Boesky

"Business art is the step that comes after Art," Andy Warhol wrote in 1975. What he meant was that he was abandoning the idea of the artist as alienated creative individual to run his studio as an enterprise turning out a range of products marked by a recognizable visual style and signature. Takashi Murakami has imitated Warhol in calling his studio a "factory"; in this exhibition he might have been seen as paying tribute to the Pop master by hanging sets of images, identical but for color, that evoke Warhol's "Flowers" in different colors and dimensions or his Campbell's soup cans. Like the latter, Murakami's images featured a product logo, in this case the Louis Vuitton monogram.

Murakami has, however, carried Warhol's idea to another level. He has not "appropriated" the LV label, but is actually working for the company, under the aegis of designer Marc Jacobs. His exhibition was inextricably connected with the company's spring line of handbags, which bore his reworking of the venerable logo in his "Superflat" style, produced to accompany Jacobs's clothing line for the company. Gallery-owner Marianne Boesky, in an interview, stressed the art character of the handbags, claiming democratic implications for Murakami's crossing of the art/business boundary: "For Murakami, everyone should have access to art, especially those who are not necessarily cultured." At any rate, she might have added, those with an extra thousand dollars or so.

The central totem of the exhibition was a 100-inch-tall fiberglass panda, standing on an antique Vuitton trunk that served as a pedestal; with green and violet cherry blossoms on his ears and Murakami's signature eyeballs—elements also used on the bags. The panda reappeared in a video depicting the adventures of a little girl who wanders into an LV store while trying to call her pals on a cell phone; swallowed by the panda, she falls, in a beautifully animated swirl of colors and shapes, into a luxury-consumer wonderland. Her child's cuteness protects her from any trauma; after finding her friends in the ever-never land of the global shopping city, she shares a last loving glance with the lovable monster that swallowed her up and spewed her out.

Like the video and the sculpture, the panel paintings included in the show were exquisitely made by Murakami's teams of

Hong Lei: *Three Flies of Yancheng City*, 2003, mixed mediums, 8 by 10½ by 5 inches; at Chambers Fine Art.

