

TURNER CARROLL

Hung Liu

COMMENTS

Hung Liu seems to be parodying the spate of recent Pop-art-esque Chinese painters in her own latest paintings. Their various tropes recur, though much more naturalistically rendered, in Liu's own pictures: grinning kids, family groups, Mao-era kitsch, Mao suits, Mao himself, and so forth. But Liu has no critique of her fellow artists in mind; the images she paints with her broad, wet, staggeringly articulate brush were originally photographs she took in and around the village(s) she inhabited as an adolescent during the Cultural Revolution. In other words, Bay Area-based Liu draws upon exactly what her co-generationalists working in Beijing work from, their experience as so many tiny cogs in a massive, brutal experiment. They all know now how lucky they are to be alive. But this was their childhood, so they regard it with as much nostalgia as horror or regret. The Chinese Pop painters distance themselves from such tumultuous feelings, making a big show of their irony; Liu, on the other hand, embodies the complexity of such fraught recollections in her rich, virtuosic technique - and also in the disarmingly pleasant attitudes projected by her subjects, as well as gentling motifs (flowers, butterflies) she adds almost as iconographic band-aids to reassure viewers and comfort her subjects. Liu knows she is producing layered pictures, and she paints - and adds layers-accordingly.

Peter Frank, Huffington Post, January 2012