TAO SIQI
Trembling
17 November - 18 December, 2022

FORTNIGHT INSTITUTE
21 East 3rd St. NYC
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Tao Siqi is driven by metaphor and the constraints of a cropped image. She directs a phantasmagoric array of subjects, initiated in saturated extremes. Her paintings are soft-edged closeups of innocuous moments or intense potentials. Siqi consistently walks along the borders between cute and lewd, sensual and violent. She endows her images with sensory overdrive - her objects and formal language producing overwhelming scenes of lust or affectionate visions of cuteness.

At certain junctures these compositions become almost sickly sweet - their candy colored palettes protecting the viewer from some of the charged imagery. Rather than engaging photo-realism, Siqi constructs her subjects with an atmospheric haze. Her cinema is surreal, as bizarre situations produce Lynchian unrest for the viewer. This sentiment is propelled by her consistent leveraging of ambiguity. The monster under the bed holds power because he is only ever a supposed threat: it is merely enough that he could be there should one be emboldened to peek into the shadows. A feline dimension persists in several compositions. In *Entwine,* Siqi depicts two fuzzy tails joined together in the shape of a heart. The composition is encased in a misty haze and further populated by twinkling yellow marks. *Pure* is, alternatively, relatively exacted in terms of composition. This painting is one of the more overt expressions within the exhibition. The cat's features are well articulated, though the crop still limits the viewer's appraisal of context.

There are other canvases which seduce the viewer as their implications produce erotic tensions. *Conceal* is perhaps the best example of such ambiguity, as it bears little formal matter save for its deep crimson palette and limited suggestive contours. *Cheers* is another such image as it zooms in on toes softly caressing glassware rendered in yellow and ochre. *Sheepish* offers an additional manifestation of looming desire - the up close and personal shot of a torso appears to be mid-strip and a small snake emerges from the shadows of a silky blouse. The image boasts a reflexive spatial depth, as the subject's tousled shirt is oddly imposing in comparison to the supple chest area. The content remains unsettled - the viewer left to contend with its vulgarities. Gobs of clear liquid are hallmarks in the work, as they attach themselves to the cheeks of lovers in *Silence* and rest atop the weblike form in *Tears.* There are - needless to say - myriad implications here, without any move toward clarification on Siqi's part. These elements float amongst the other open signifiers within her practice. Siqi's ability to negotiate subtext is a compelling force behind her image-making. The latent content is never guaranteed, as the manifest signs remain open-ended. - Text by Reilly Davidson

Tao Siqi was born in Wuhan, Hubei province, China in 1994, and currently lives and works in Shanghai. She graduated from Hubei Institute of Fine Art with a BA in painting in 2016. Her solo exhibitions include *Trembling* at Fortnight Institute (New York, 2022), *Deep Water* at Clima (Milan, Italy, 2022), *Tender Thorns* at Capsule Shanghai (Shanghai, China, 2021). Her group exhibitions include, *F*ck Art: The Body & Its Absence* (Museum of Sex, New York, 2022), *Notes on Ecstatic Unity* (OTP Copenhagen, Denmark, 2022), *Mouthed Echoes* (Lyles & King, New York, 2022), *Indoor Weather,* curated by Lu Xiangyi and Wang Shiying (Light Palette Through Time and Space, 2022 Caochangdi Young Artists Group Exhibition, Beijing, China, 2022), *Nine Lives* (Fortnight Institute, New York, 2021), *IMPORT-EXPORT* (Import Export Project, Locarno, Switzerland, 2019), *Right Behind Your Eyes,* curated by Sarah Faux (Capsule Shanghai, Shanghai, China, 2019), *The Apple Incident* (Dream Co., Beijing, China, 2018), *On Drawing: Visibility of Power* curated by Lu Mingjun (J: Gallery, Shanghai, China, 2017) and *Chūn rì dì xìan* (RS_PROJECTS, Wuhan, China, 2016) among others.