

Arieff on liu



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The article written by Allison Arieff is mainly about the Identity and History in the work of Hung Liu. This article speaks of not only the struggle of Hung Lieu for artistic identity but also about her struggle to define her conflicted personality, she being a Chinese born woman artist living in the West. Her thoughts are revealed from her words, " I often feel suspended between the two cultures, but I see this is as a unique position, hopefully a situation that will energize me" (pg. No. - 39). But the most important thing about Liu is that she has been successful in fusing the Eastern and the Western Cultural traditions by very placidly combining the traditional Chinese painting with Western style. It should be noted that Liu has used her artistic skills not merely to exhibit them as an artist but to expose the evils of the Chinese traditions. After immigrating to United States she enjoyed the freedom of expressing herself freely through murals, which otherwise wouldn't have been possible if she had been in China. She has used her art as a weapon to rebel against the oppressive patriarchal system of China. Her paintings deal with the intricate issues like foot binding and Western art historical tradition. The most remarkable style of her painting is the reproduction of female characters from the photographs she got from Chinese books. One such book was 'The Face of China', which was published in United States and had photographs taken by foreign tourists in China between 1860 and 1912. She manipulated the images in the photographs and painted them on canvas by using Western style. She incorporated photographs in her paintings, which was otherwise discouraged in China. And a fine example of this is 'Resident Alien', which is essentially a Self-portrait constructed on Green Card, which belonged to an immigrant " Fortune Cookie" alias Hung Lieu. In this she uses her own identification card photo. She calls herself " Fortune Cookie" and it

signifies the Western manipulation of Chinese Culture. This article reveals how Chinese women suffered under the male dominated society and were physically and mentally abused under Communist rule. They lacked autonomy and were debarred from public life. Women were looked down upon by men and were considered to be the objects to satisfy their desires. It was said that education was not the virtue of woman. An ancient code confirms this point: " The wise man founded the city; but the wise woman destroys it. Disaster does not descend from Heaven; it comes from Woman"(pg. no. - 37). Liu desires to give these women their place in history. Her paintings change the angle of a viewer to look at her paintings as merely the objects for gazing, but he sees something beyond that. This shows that she is successful in not only proving her point but also in creating awareness amongst the people all over the world. One of the most remarkable points about Liu is that, despite of immigrating to United States, she has not forgotten her roots, which is China. She continues to fight for the social causes. She has dared to mock the patriarchal Chinese culture by exposing the most erotic part of women, which are their feet, in her paintings. She also rebukes the traditional Western portrayals of women by referencing the iconography and using the titles of canonical artworks such as her Mona Lisa I, Madonna and La Grand Odalisque (pg. No. - 35). Arieff has very well dealt with social issues of Cultural Collisions, Plight of Women in the male dominated society, Art and Traditions by citing the example of Hung Liu. The writer intends to create awareness among the masses regarding the sufferings of women artists in the male dominated system and she has also discussed about the diversities in the Western and Eastern Cultures. The writer being a woman and a Westerner has made a detailed study about the

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artist and history of Eastern and Western Cultures by referring a number of books and also by interviewing Hung Lieu. She takes for granted that her readers are mature, well educated enough to understand what she intends to convey through this article and that they will take this article positively. Thus this article is very enlightening and very well written.

Source:

Article by Arieff Allison - Cultural Collisions - Identity and History in the work of Hung Liu.