

Using visual images to write a 'novel'



"Chapter One: Game of the Giants," where clay marbles of different sizes are scattering in the direction of the stars, by Lu Lei. — Ti Gong

Wang Jie

How do you write a novel in the language of art? Artist Lu Lei has an answer.

The charm of fiction partly lies in the reader's imagination and ability to reorganize reality. In this sense, fiction doesn't have to be limited by the form of text. Anything based on imagination could be a fictional.

Lu's solo exhibition, "Wander Giant," is currently on display at ShanghART, a project he has been planning for years.

Weaving years of memories, Lu has made his perceptions and absurd thoughts a visual work of fiction with installations and sculptures. For him, absurdity doesn't mean self-mockery or irony; it is the way the creative process should be.

Born in Jiangsu Province in 1972, Lu now works and lives in Beijing. He graduated in 1998 from the Sculpture Institute of China Academy of Art.

In "Wander Giant," he depicts the "reveries of a wandering giant," Lu said. The giant incarnation of collectivism, wandering in a dreamland of memories, renders his farcical day-dreaming into cold, hard bodies.

The huge scattered objects and scenes are like the fragments of dreams, familiar yet strange at the same time, attracting those who have accidentally entered this space.

Factories, chimneys, bats, loudspeakers and other recurring images are connected to Lu's childhood memories. He incorporates dimensions of the universe and space, further expanding and freeing the exhibition space.

The three exhibition halls are presented as three chapters of the novel, with imaginary themes of "Game of the Giants," "Reveries of the Giant" and "The Giant Walking."

Although there is no specific image of the giant, by placing him as the subject in the narrative structure, Lu embodies the influence and imprints of it everywhere. Visitors walking through the halls experience assorted images and scenes, enabling them to produce their own stories.

For example, in the passage "In the cold winter, the giants gather at the center of the square, playing marble games with sand, according to the direction of the stars," the title itself resembles a fragment from a novel, expressing a vivid



An artistic utility sink with legs and faucets is installed in "Chapter Three: The Giant Walking" by Lu Lei.

picture to viewers.

The large relief sculpture of sand molded with resin and engraved with atlases of constellations is scattered on the ground like the plates of continents. The sand balls interspersed around are reminiscent of the glass marble games that children play. However, the heavy presence and rough materials in the exhibition convey a sense of primitive mythology, as if they were ancient relics.

The "Wander Giant" continues to show Lu's consistent personal style. Viewers can easily identify the artist's unique creation at first sight, from its cold and restrained color expression, the sensitivity and control of industrial materials and the mysterious imagery of personal memory and social symbols.

Although the exhibition will produce various interpretations when viewed by the public, Lu believes the purpose of art is "to create for no one but myself!" — reminiscent of novelist J.D. Salinger, who once famously said, "I write for myself, for my own pleasure. Salute for myself!"

Date: Through December 29 (closed on Mondays), 11am-6pm

Venue: ShanghART, West Bund

Address: Bldg 10, 2555 Longteng Ave

Father-daughter duo show water-themed landscapes

Zhu Ying

AN oil painting exhibition featuring watery landscapes created by Chen Xiejun and his daughter Chen Ying kicked off at Yun Jian Granary last week. Entitled "Images of the Water City," it runs through February.

A total of 105 river landscape paintings from Shanghai, watterowns in the Jiangnan area (regions south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River), Hong Kong, Macau and foreign harbor cities are displayed in the exhibition.

"Water is a vital source of life

and it is exactly the essence of Jiangnan's charms," said Chen Xiejun, a scholar and former director of Shanghai Museum.

The Huangpu River in Shanghai, Slender West Lake in Yangzhou, Jiangsu Province, Victoria Harbor in Hong Kong and a small harbor in Vollenhove, the Netherlands, are all captured through dense oil paints.

Influenced by her father, Chen Ying is also dedicated to painting and art education while working at an NGO in New York. The father and

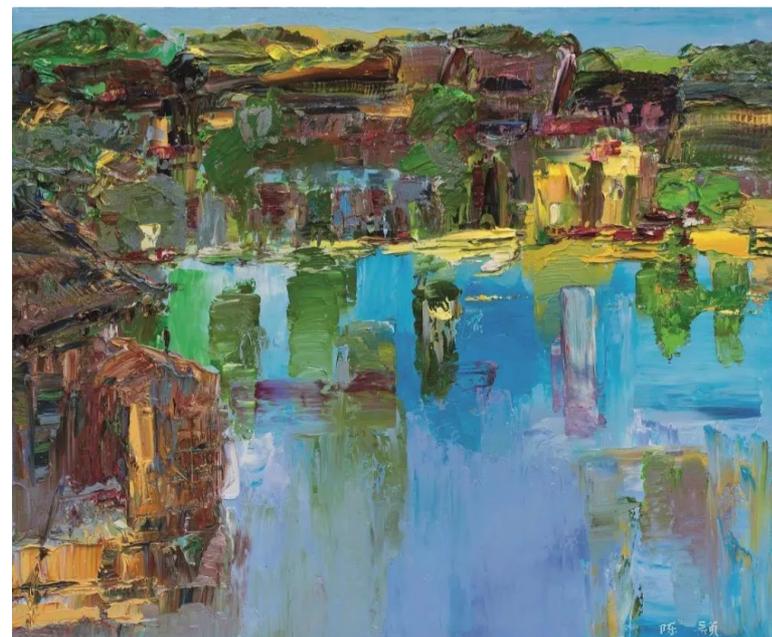
daughter have previously held exhibitions featuring the Taihang Mountains, lotus flowers, Dunhuang and Shanghai.

As its name indicates, the new venue Yun Jian Granary in Songjiang District is renovated from old granaries, the earliest of which dates to the 1950s. Occupying 98 mu (6.5 hectares) of land, the area housed 59 buildings.

Date: Through February 29 (closed on Monday), 9:30am-5pm

Venue: Yun Jian Granary

Address: 10053 Songjin Highway



"Images of Water City" by Chen Ying