

“Pretending”

Izumi Ueda Yuu

Luís Almeida

Run Jiang

D.Dominick Lombardi

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“Pretending”

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The online Oxford Dictionary defines pretending in this way: “speak and act so as to make it appear that something is the case when in fact it is not.” Most of us can still remember playing as a child; dressing, behaving, claiming to be something we are not. Some of those pretend characters are the classic princess, an adventurous astronaut, a ballet dancer, a sneaky spy, or simply a person that operates a car, boat, train or plane. What is common with artists, is that childhood pretend playing often occurred with aspects of drawing or painting, as that imagined world was funneled through the images created by the pretenders.

As a child, I clearly remember drawing crazy looking fish on paper, cutting them out and playing with them on the floor as if I was immersed in an underwater world.

As adults, that ability to move into an alternative place that is under control solely by the creator, that form of pretending, is still very much alive in the work of the four artists in the exhibition: **Izumi Ueda, Luís Almeida, Run Jiang and myself.**

The art of **Izumi Ueda** relates very much to Symbolism in the way it conjures up dreamy narratives through pure, poetic, potent iconography. Everything, every belief, emotion, realization is boiled down to its essence, waiting to re-emerge in the mind and thoughts of the viewer. Once the conversation begins between the art and the viewer, the mysterious spiritual aspect of the art comes forward. The imagined, created place of make believe is one built of memory, childhood dreams, things that sometimes happen in the periphery that later become central and Ueda's art lives in that space where the mind transcends the matter.

Luís Almeida's art goes back and forth between fantastical, heroic imagined worlds to a brutal form of representation. His ability to reveal a mystical imagining overrun with narratives to the simple truth of the absurd or benign aspects of the everyday, all with an element of wild humor is the core of Almeida's art. A brilliant draftsman and a provider of unadulterated color theory, this artist is still very much connected to that inner child that once ruled all his thoughts. The message here is: "There is no art without total freedom of thought and expression." A mental state that hinges solely on his ability to leave it all out there for everyone to see.

Run Jiang's art is a perfect blend of being and pretending. Jiang's more colorful works focus on the waking dream state, when one's thoughts are completely unrelated to one's physical place. In this instance, Jiang puts forth her own unique way of portraying the multi-planar reality theory whereby previously unseen worlds collide. In her black and white ink drawings which she notes as a Dream series, Jiang brings together lifelong experiences, both real and imagined, into a precious series of vignettes and vistas that can at one moment seem bucolic and the next imperiling.

In my paintings, I am repurposing the thousands of little drawings I made when most of the world was sheltered in place. For an artist, this state of being sheltered alone is not so unusual. In fact we crave it. However, the danger that lurked just outside the studio door and windows in the time of the worst COVID days was very imposing. Studying, mining and resolving a few of the numerous, relatively automatic drawings I made back then, in oil on old canvases or on 1960's and 70's printed materials gives me the chance to return back to a time when I pretended everything was going to be okay.







