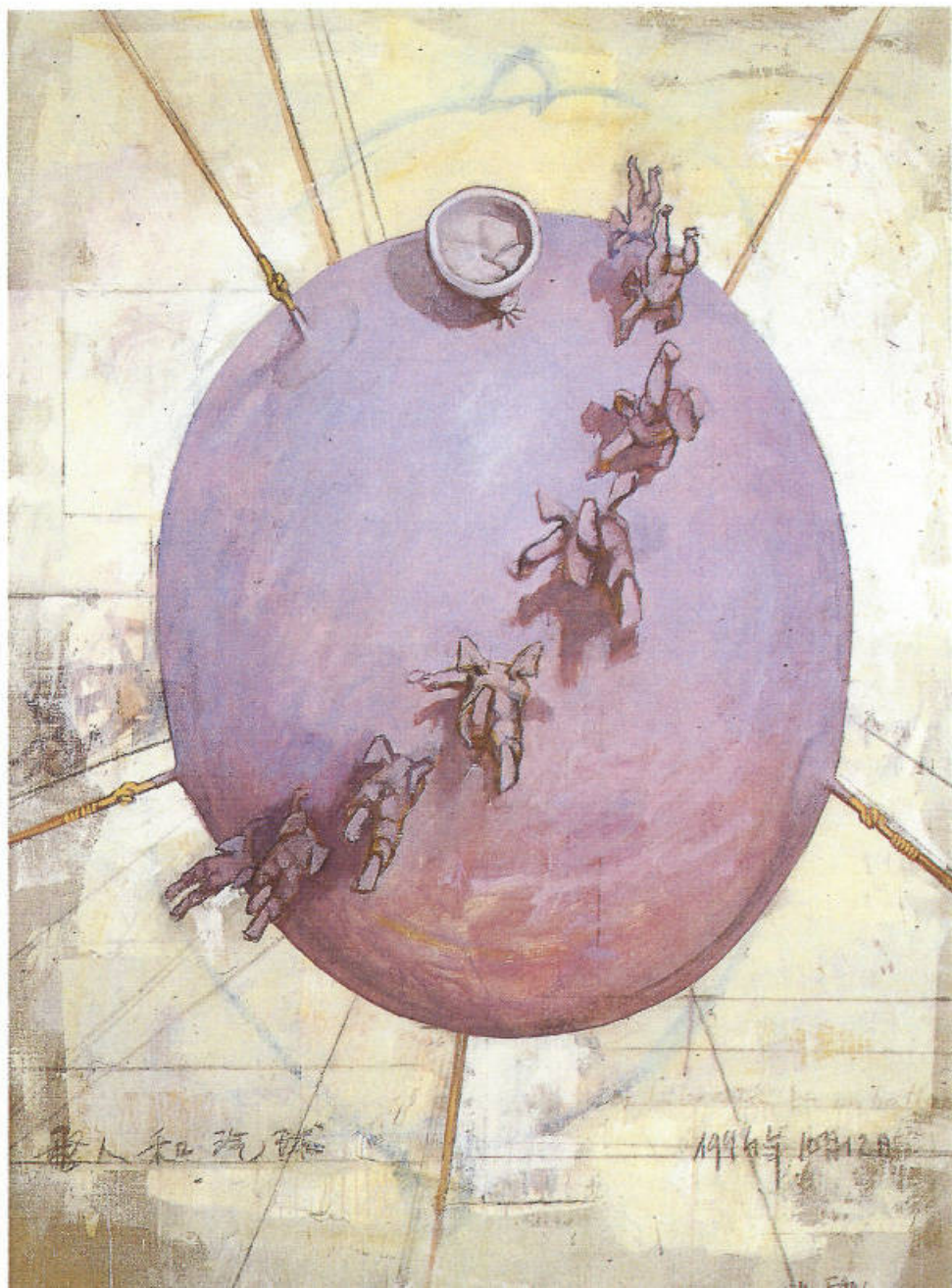


XIAO FAN

Estudio para una escultura
Study for a Sculpture



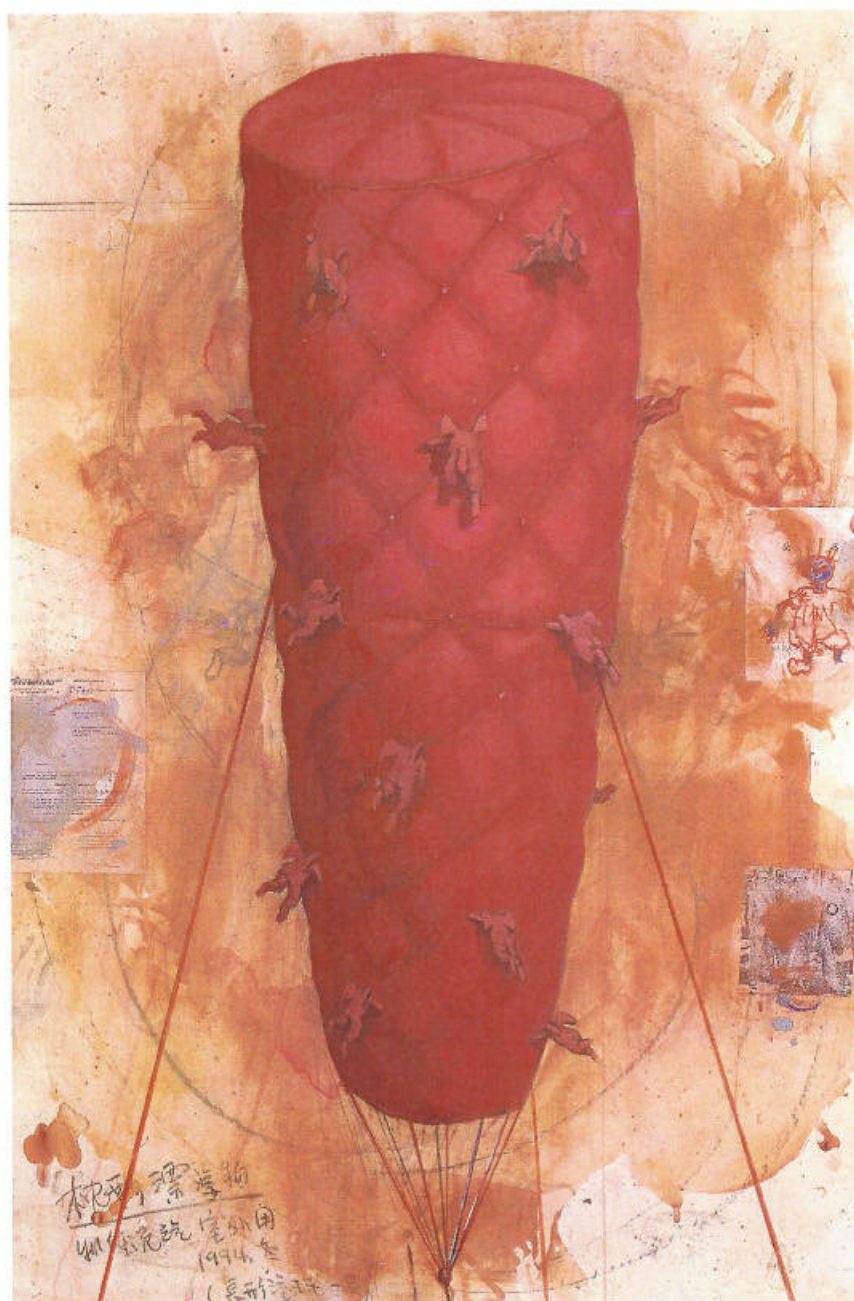
Hombre volador con globo rojo • 1995 • acrilico/papel encolado sobre tela • 150 x 150 cm

Hombre volador con globo violado • 1994 • acrílico sobre tela • 140 x 190 cm

Hombre volador con globo violado • 1994 • acrílico sobre tela • 140 x 190 cm

Florien I • 1995 • acrílico/papel encolado sobre tela • 60 x 92 cm

Sin titulo • 1995 • bronce pulido • 14 x 19,5 cm



木匠 梁学物
州 宝花院 室外用
1974 冬
(夏刊)

The first thing to capture my attention in the Paris studio of Xiao Fan was an enigmatic object, a child's balloon cast in bronze - natural size and normal in every way, with one important exception : five imprints retained forever from the grasp of the outstretched fingers of a hand.

There are objects that possess the inevitability of a joke which leads us into ambush and then closes the trap with its punchline. The basic laws of science often have a childlike simplicity. Someone had to be the first to put down, for the record, that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, or, that the screw propeller is most effective when placed below the water's surface.

Take Hooke's law, for example : it forms the basis of the theory of elasticity, and in its most general form states that, for a certain range of stresses, the strain produced is proportional to the stress applied and independent of the time, and disappears completely on removal of the stress.

There are theological rationales that make me dizzy, the same effect I suffer when under the influence of, say, Bernini. *Dort is ein Fels, des hohe steile Klippe furchtbar hindabschaut in die jahe Tiefe*, as the poet once said : *Yonder is a mount whose steep high-angled cliffs peer down frightfully into the sudden deep.*

The sexuality of angels is the most solemn of subjects, as is speculation about how many of them can dance on the head of a pin. The idle thought, the overlooked, the embarrassing, the humble, the queasily absurd, sometimes open vistas. Astronomers are not above singing Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star from time to time.

Balloons - formed by hot air - are frivolous, innocuous things, with their festive memory of kindergarten birthday parties... islands of air surrounded by air, ephemeral. Clowns, carnivals. A feeling of pathos, of fragility, vulnerability. But under what directions have these squadrons of little winged putti flown in formation headfirst into these temporal bodies ? Every body is supposed to preserve its state of rest or uniform motion in a straight line except in so far as it is compelled to change that state by forces impressed on it. And, an action is always opposed by an equal reaction ; the mutual actions of two bodies are always equal and act in opposite directions. Yet to contradict Newton by force of imagination was not least of Baron Munchausen's accomplishments.

Only true artists seem capable of exploiting the emotion of embarrassment, to navigate around its circumference as they seek out adventures along untravelled paths, plunging wholeheartedly into improbable follies. For such artists, the reward of their exploration is the fulfilment of their perseverance, as scientists who spend lifetimes dedicated to the study of soap-bubbles.

These improbable meditations lead down unknown byways into the realm of the mysterious mundane, the dimension of the *infra-mince* membrane separating interior from exterior. Consistent demonstration of the range of a single obsession is more valuable than ideology. It establishes lines of communication without message or mission, crisis or crusade, and its merit is to achieve the expression of the individual over time. A hand grasps a balloon, grasps nothing, a body of air that yields to the force that alters it and resumes its original size and shape after being subject to this pressure, a system of forces in equilibrium, a ratio, and therefore dimensionless.



Sin título • 1995 • porcelana y resina de poliéster • 29 cm

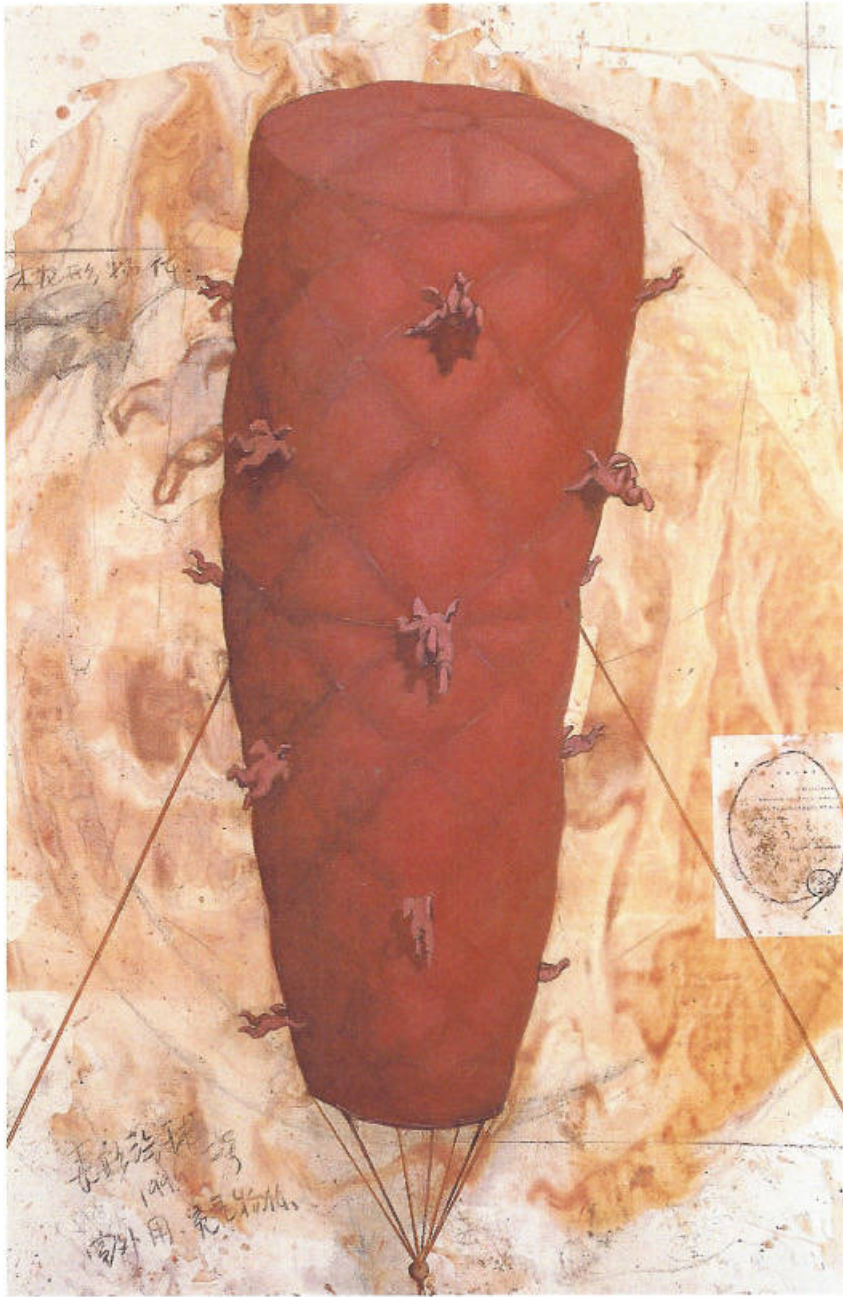
DES
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Homme volant avec un ballon du monde. 1990. 10尾笔制作(刘). (2018)



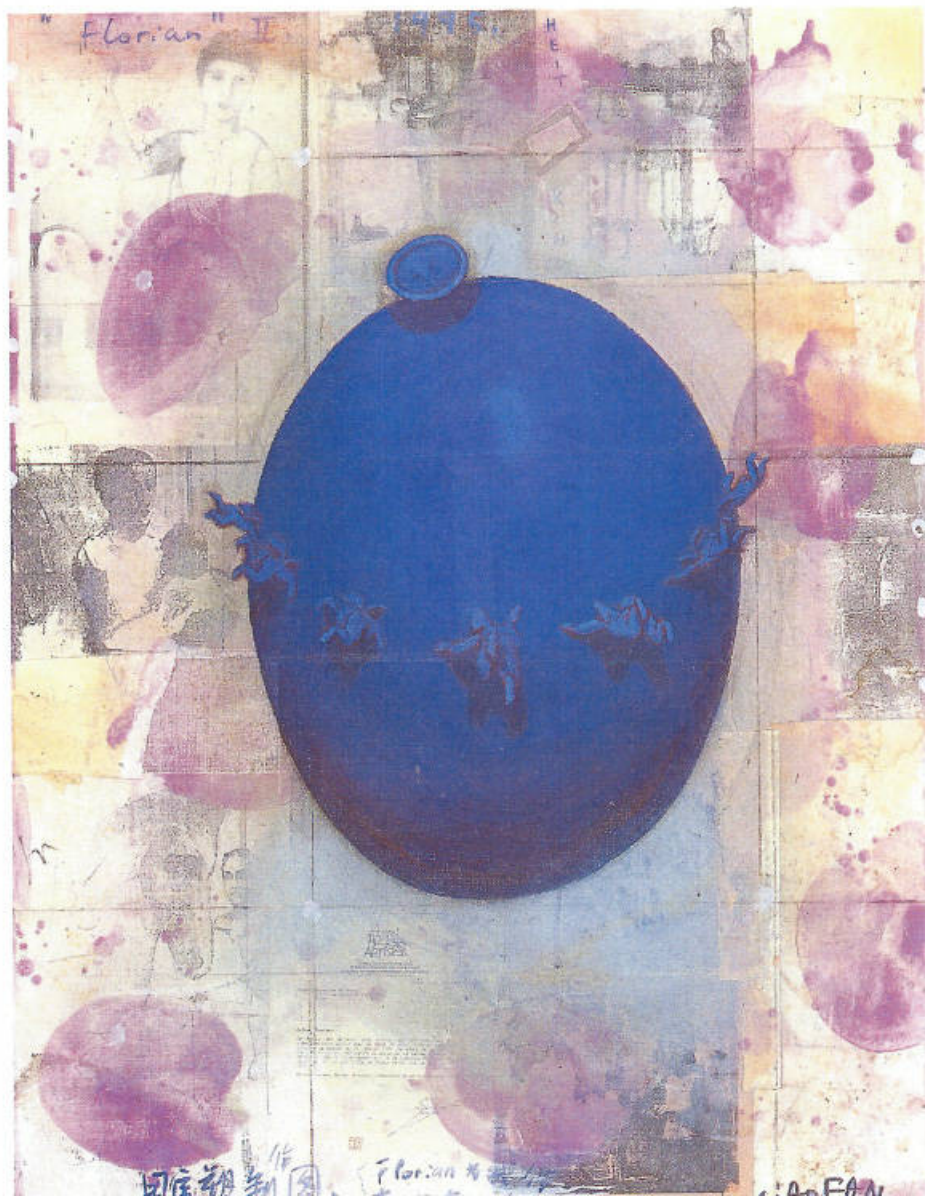
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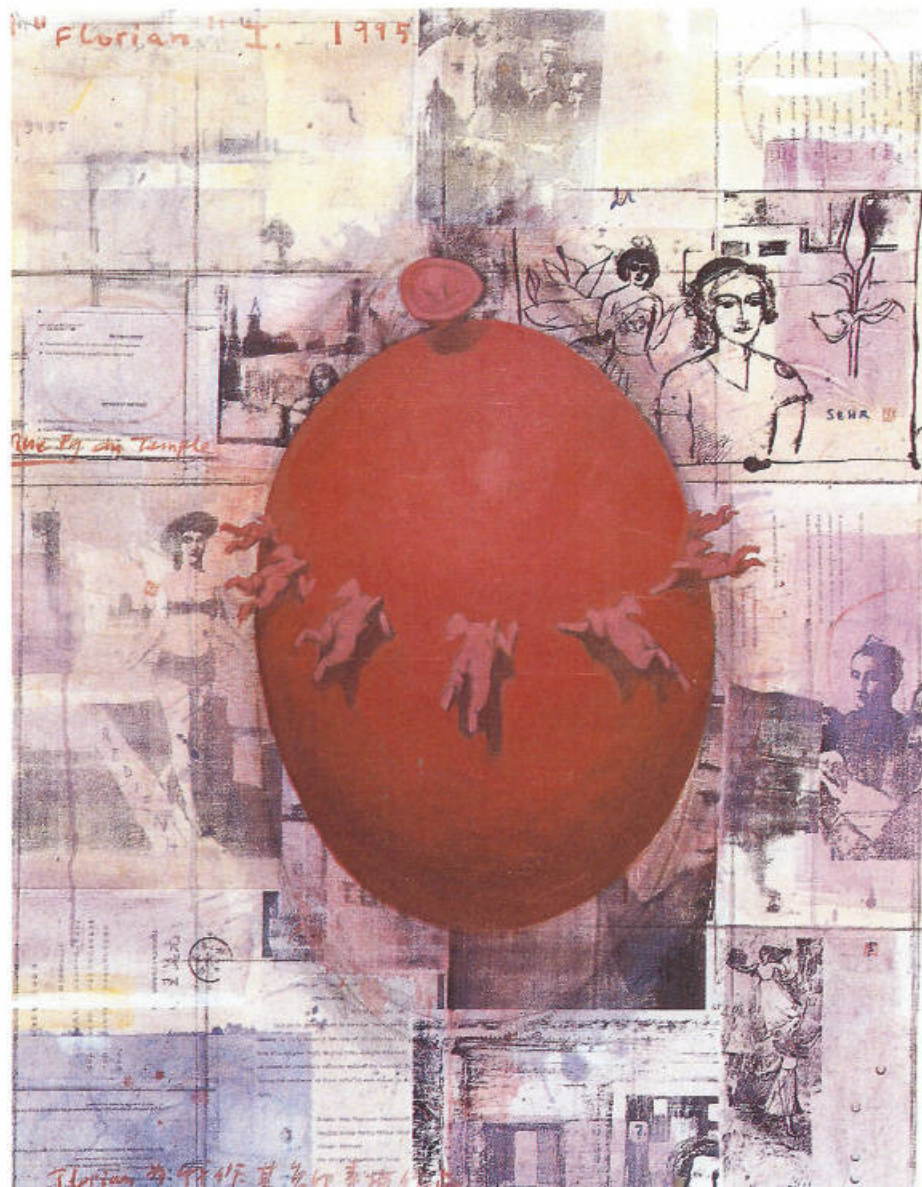


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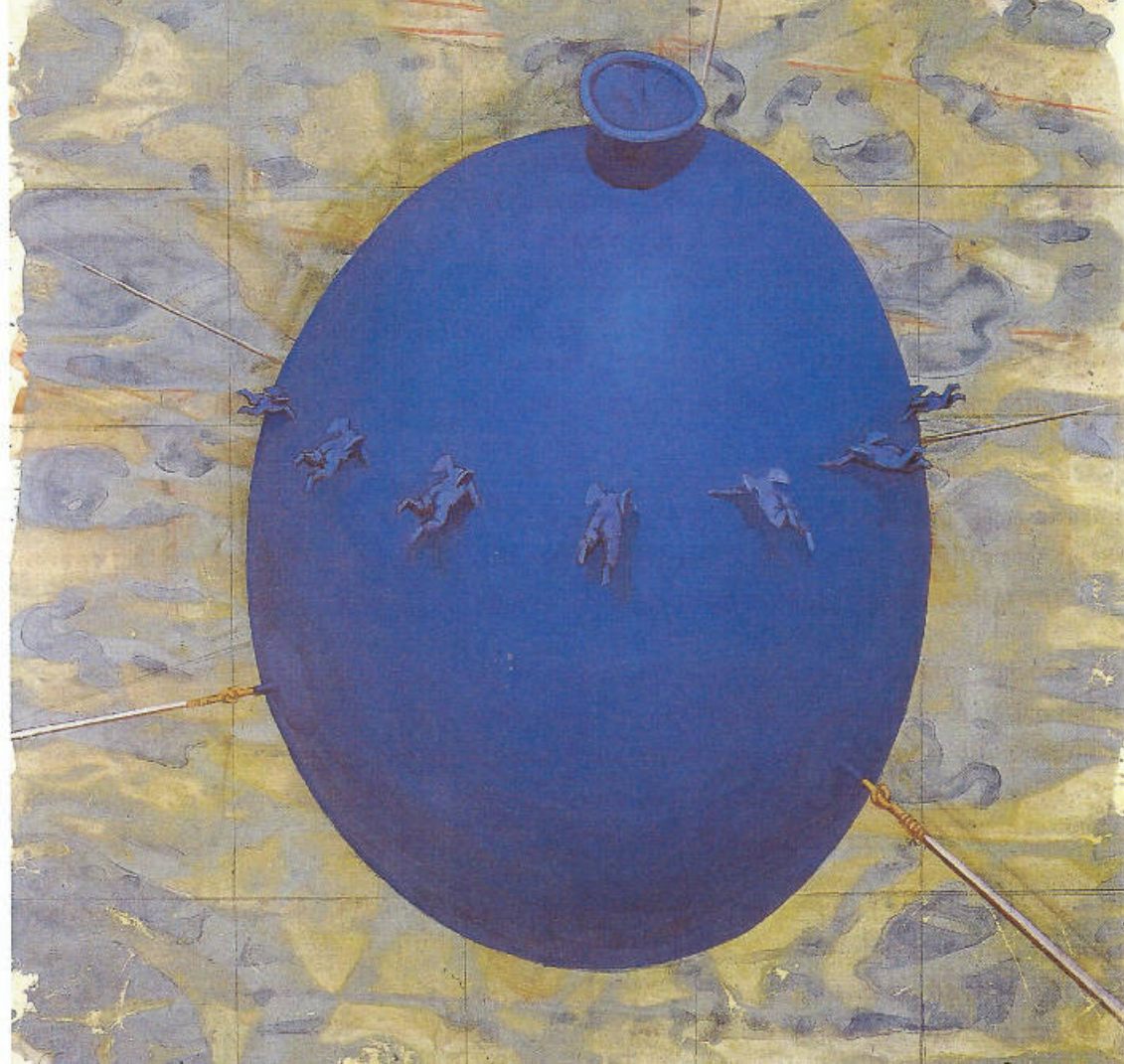


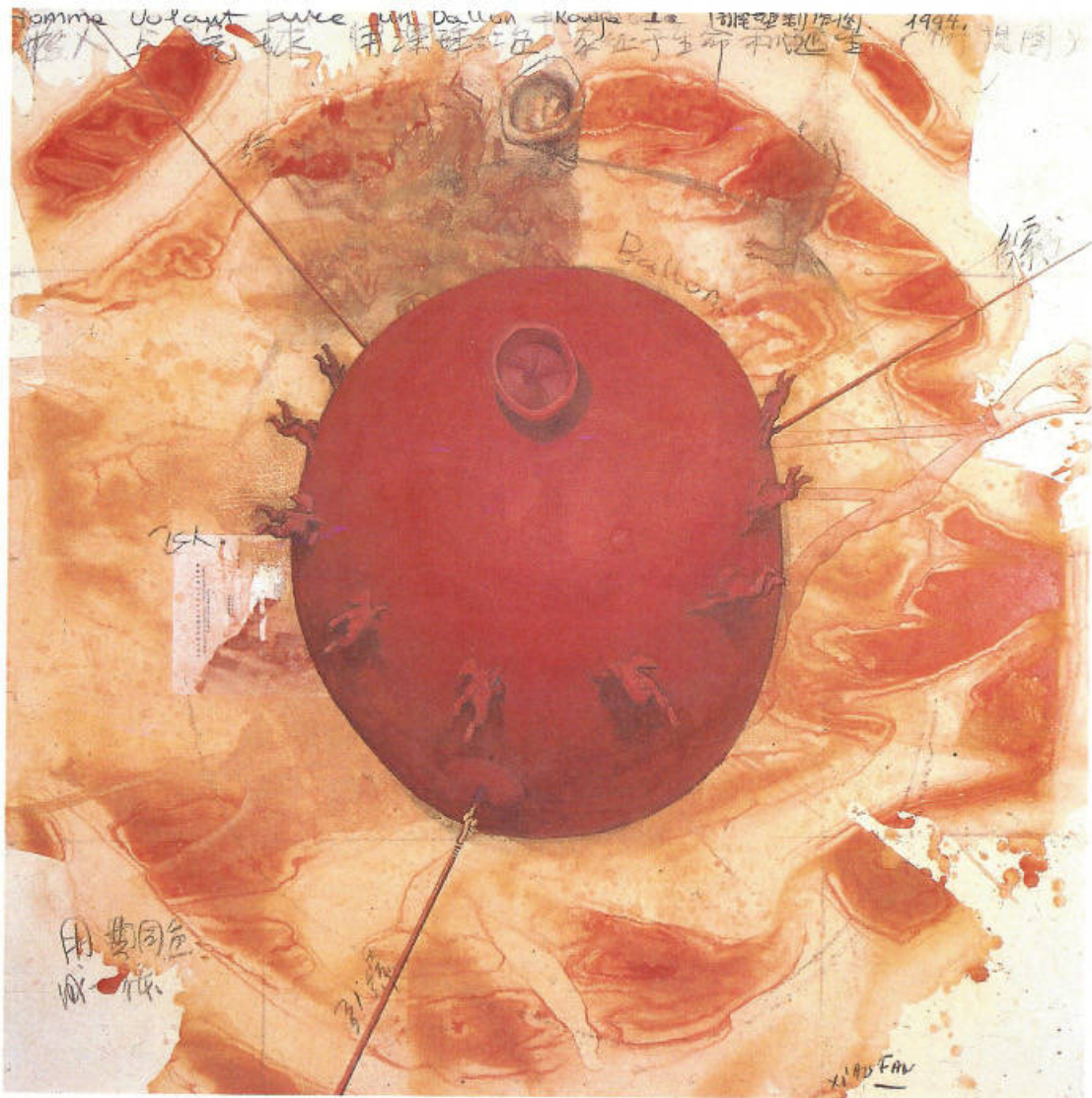


XIAO FAN

Estudio para una escultura
Study for a Sculpture

Hammes Volant avec ballon bleu 1492 雕塑制作图





Hombre volador con globo transparente • 1994 • óleo sobre tela • 60 x 92 cm



Hombre volador con globo terraqueo • 1994 • acrílico/papel encolado sobre tela • 150 x 150 cm

Homme volant avec un ballon du monde. 1940. 飞翔的地球仪, (纸本, Ⅱ.)





Xiao Fan, like all artists worth their salt, hesitates to place philosophical limits on his work, evincing a certain distrust for language, for titles, linguistical commentary which often serve to make up for what the picture lacks. He finds symbols a superior form of intercourse, more direct, more powerful, although unexplained, because they are based on personal gestures and the spontaneity of pure imagination. Such tools permit him to go much further in the creation of a total, intimate world, than verbal expression.

"I prefer poetry over philosophy," the artist tells me. "Instead of dialectical precision, the suggestiveness of intuition. A balloon can be viewed from the other side. When I go from France to China, I feel I am journeying to the other side. Now I am here. Or am I there? I arrive at a point of not knowing, like a man in the Taoist story who dreams he is a butterfly, but upon waking does not know which was himself and which the butterfly, or if he was the butterfly's dream."

For Xiao Fan, angels are another face of the enigma. "First of all, there is the element of hazard, of accident. They came to me from Lorenzetti. More than a specific religious symbol, for me they are linked to the desire to fly, to soar. Ideal beings. I am attracted to religious art because it is there that one finds work in which the human reality manifests the unseen, where an attempt is being made to present mysteries in a concrete form. The Baroque was a search for a way to reveal enigmas. This is linked to my love for Surrealism, although I have a personal view of it. I am attracted to the symbolic aspect, to the insistence of poetic ways of thought, as a working process. The feeling of lightness, weightlessness, a floating sensation, which only poetry possesses."

At home equally with painting and the making of sculpture, Xiao Fan declares them to be, for him, one and the same. "Drawing permits me to analyze a subject's perspective, but I can shift easily to sculptural dimensions. When painting, I have the image of sculptural form in my mind."

Xiao Fan, like many artists before him, is an astute collector. An elongated rabbit mask in wood from West Africa, cohabits with an Greco-Asiatic bust from the time of Alexander, which could represent Buddha as easily as Apollo. The books on his much-consulted shelf range from Paolo Uccello, Giotto and Piero della Francesca to Kounellis, Penone and Broodthaers, from and The Legend of the Angels by Michel Leiris to Hans Bellmer and Helmut Newton.

"The ephemeral quality of concrete artistic symbols may explain my attraction to the work of artists like Penone or Kounellis. Paolo Uccello attracts me because of his rigid sense of perspective. A symbol serves the function of describing the outline of things we cannot see. The footprint swept away by the sea's wave. For me the folly of art is a higher, more real, truth. The wall is very thin, almost transparent. It requires a little belief to break through from the confinement of human reality to the fantasy beyond."

An artist should always have two ideas, said Georges Braque, one to destroy the other. In this search for the right set of tools with which to build structures of hilarious contradiction, of ephemeral enigma, Xiao Fan has arrived at a universal yet intimate vision with a suggestiveness of intuition that is his alone.

Alan JONES
Paris, February 1995