

HUNG LIU

From the Artist

"In my newest paintings, which are primarily images of women working or refugees fleeing, I have introduced traditional Chinese painting motifs into the photo-based field. These include images of birds, flowers, stamps, and landscapes, among others, all borrowed from Chinese art history and suspended in the paintings, I hope to enliven the photographic subject and stir up its surface. In particular, the stylized Chinese birds - some from paintings



Comfort Woman, 2001

birds from various dynasties connive and conspire on a network of branches like party functionaries engaged in endless, gossipy intrigue. A son leads his aging mother from the chaos of the Japanese occupation of Nanjing while behind them a red mural-like field of birds, Buddhist icons, and a miniature landscape replaces the devastation of the city they are fleeing with a tragic and pathetic hallucination of their cultural history. In these senses, the lasting effect of my new paintings is an underlying feeling of melancholy and lament in which history both repeats and forgets itself."

-Hung Liu, from Artist Statement



Comfort Woman, 2001

as old as one thousand years - seem to me like witnesses from China's past, overlooking and commenting upon events, both epic and private, from its modern era. In other words, two layers of historical representation, from traditional painting and modern photography, co-exist in my new paintings, and the result, I think, is a kind of mutual liberation and reinvention.

This overlay or weaving together of images from the ancient and modern past continues my interest in a contemporary form of history painting in which the images from one era witness and pass through those of another. An old lady sweeps rice from a railroad platform during a famine as sparrows pick branches for food. A cabal of



Comfort Woman, 2001