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By Rebecca Sonkin

In the works of Beijing-based painter Wei Dong, flabby women often in states of undress cavort in traditional Chinese landscape scenes or, in interiors, in front of paintings of such images. More than mere exercises in erotically charged absurdity, Wei's pictures are both satiric, symbolic portrayals of China's growing pains and expressions of his childhood fantasies.

In some pictures Wei's women, wearing People's Liberation Army uniforms and looking dissolute and unhealthy, loom large against these strangely sexual dreamscapes, which are always lushly rendered with just paper, ink, and brush. Flesh is doughy and profuse, material falls in luxuriant folds.

Wei's women give his pictures an up-to-the-moment, surrealistic edge. Clothing ensembles such as Mao jackets, Chinese opera costumes, and Western lingerie are completely incongruous. Jarring, too, are the beer bottles, lipstick tubes, and antique back scratchers that are strewn about. The women's strangely sweet expressions are charming, almost disturbingly so.

Surely the most obvious—and provocative—feature of Wei's pictures is that the figures are never fully naked. A breast is bared here; a buttock revealed there; often no thought is given to trousers. The partial nudity conveys a heightened sensuality, even with blue veins bulging. In the two series "Outing in the Spring" and "Landscape as a Stage", bacchanalian revelry consumes entire classical mountainscapes. These women, with their eccentric fashion sense, are full of surprises. What we don't know, of course, is whether they represent the detritus of the Culture Revolution or the state of things to come.