

animal house*

The Conformist Lei Lei Kung

28.2.25
- 22.3.25

1. *Establishments*

2025

oil, acrylic, modelling paste
and canvas paper on canvas
152 x 198 cm

2. *Cafe Bar (Opium War)*

2024

oil, modelling paste and
canvas paper on canvas
153 x 102cm

3. *Cafe Bar*

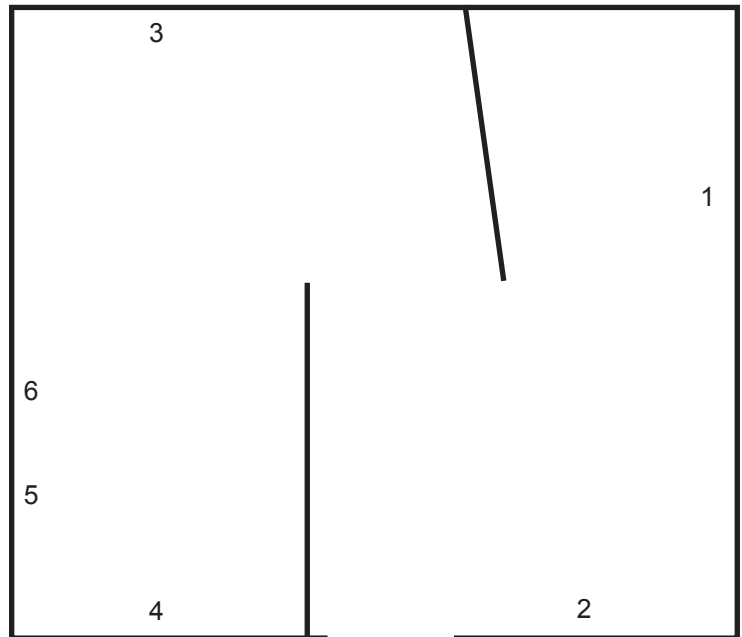
2024

oil, acrylic, modelling paste, linen
and unstretched canvas on canvas
153 x 102cm

4. *The Conformist*

2024

oil, acrylic, modelling paste
and linen on canvas
82 x 77 cm



5. *The Conformist*

(Going Somewhere? Staying for another drink?)

2024

oil, acrylic, modelling paste, linen
and canvas paper on canvas
87 x 82cm

6.

The Conformist (In studio)

2024

oil, acrylic, modelling paste, leather, resin, wax, latex gloves,
replica train track, bamboo and linen on canvas
87 x 82 cm

Blade Birds

Blade Birds perched at the bar under Lei Lei's studio. I was emaciated, tripping out and listening to Bob Dylan. Lei Lei is a great artist in my eyes, her personality, like her work, blends a necessary sincerity with a natural cool that tugs her out of an impending flop era that was promised by generations of failed indie artists but is thankfully never going to happen to her. "Why are their dogs in the painting?" I feel dumb for asking, which is the best feeling to have cause Lei Lei says "the dogs are so dumb". Dumb is calmness. Ok great we are stupid for trying to 'get' stuff, that's actually a really reasonable position.

The work is about other things too—they're movie stills from the film *The Conformist*. *The Conformist* is about a meek closet case who ends up joining the Fascist Secret Police. And here we are in Brunswick, engaging in sipping broccoli smoothies so we feel like our lives aren't disintegrating. I was really comfortable faking it that day as an art writer so I started asking questions about her work. It's been years since I tried talking about someone's artwork to their face since stopping Meow in 2020 but this time I don't feel insecure to wing it, I just feel content in trying on a new mask. Together we are vibes-based beings, there is no malice, no *Girl So Confusing*, we just want to stand with each other. There's no threat.

I try to think of more things to say about painting but we stray conversationally into music. The girl from Odwalla88 has a country album. Lei Lei is also listening to (or rather investigating) another band called Callahan & Witscher. I bring up the music I've been researching lately and realise we have both been stuck trying to decode the french producer Oklou, and this really gets us thinking, we are simultaneously trying to resolve the same issues about what Oklou is and how it affects making art in general and we almost come to a conclusion but much like Oklou's record itself our point becomes incomplete and airy. Even asking yourself if you hate it or like it—like to hate—dissolves into antimatter. What is Oklou!? It's unconscionable to draw solid conclusions about Oklou's music—Oklou is genius because it's made of indecipherable air, it evades critique because it doesn't exist—Oklou is a collage of musical references of the past 30 years inspired by rumours not experiences, it is a shadow of Arca—Grimes—Bjork and embraced by our own sadistic attraction to low vibrations.

But still Oklou's satanic hypnotism represents a possible way out from artistic fascism. Screenshot it, remember that for later, learn half the chords to an old song, copy the look, conjoin genre's, indulge your interests, steal images, fabricate scenes and smash them into the frame. The artistic vanguard is remixing! Lei Lei gravitates toward this conclusion too—the concerns Lei Lei's painting evokes are how/is it possible to escape painting's fascism, how to leave the frame, how to take a bit of a movie and a bit of dumbness to build something new, to find a new rhythm. I never before this meeting would have called a work like Lei Lei's or Oklou's anti-fascist, because it seemed like such a loaded phrase. But the terms fascist and anti-fascist have lingered in my mind ever since, so who are the real fascists? Why the person reading this of course!

Brenna O