

AI Q&A: Prison Notes on Painting

A: Why is the phrase “出售” (for sale) such a recurring motif across the paintings?

I: Well, it goes back to a time when I often went out with a friend to look at apartments. His kid was about to start school, and it turned out he had to buy a place to get the kid into one. The real estate agent kept sending him listings with the phrase, so I started putting it into my paintings.

A: You’ve painted quite a lot about housing, haven’t you? Are there many of these For Sale paintings?

I: Right. I’ve only started painting them this year, and they’re all on view now. I don’t really want to paint more. I’m a bit tired of it.

A: How do you associate the phrase “for sale” with “老人” (old man)?

I: It’s just one way to affirm that the elderly are valuable. Otherwise, there wouldn’t be buying and selling, right? If there’s a market, there’s value. Some people, even in old age, still devote themselves fully to serving others. The older they get, the more valuable they become, don’t you think?

A: There’s such a huge gap between the prices 14 CNY per hour and 190K per day. Why?

I: Some people are cheaper; some are worth more. That’s just how it is. I’ve talked about this in my shows before.

A: So someone making 190K per day must be a VIP, right?

I: Exactly. At that rate, they’d be considered the very essence of humanity. These VIPs. We should really cherish them. Give them the best food and medical care.

A: What about the price of 271 million CNY? Is that based on a real case?

I: Well, yes. It’s from a real person. A true story. He actually had that much money, plus 125 properties and 216 cars. I was shocked. In theory, he could have been a VIP. But then he was exposed as a bad person. The media covered it. So, strictly speaking, he’s no longer a VIP.

A: One last question. What does painting mean to you?

I: Painting means life to me.

A: Then, when you sell a painting, you’re selling your life?

I: Exactly. Iggy Pop once told me, “Never sell your soul for money.” He’s such a punk. But I’d say I’ve survived to this day only by selling mine.