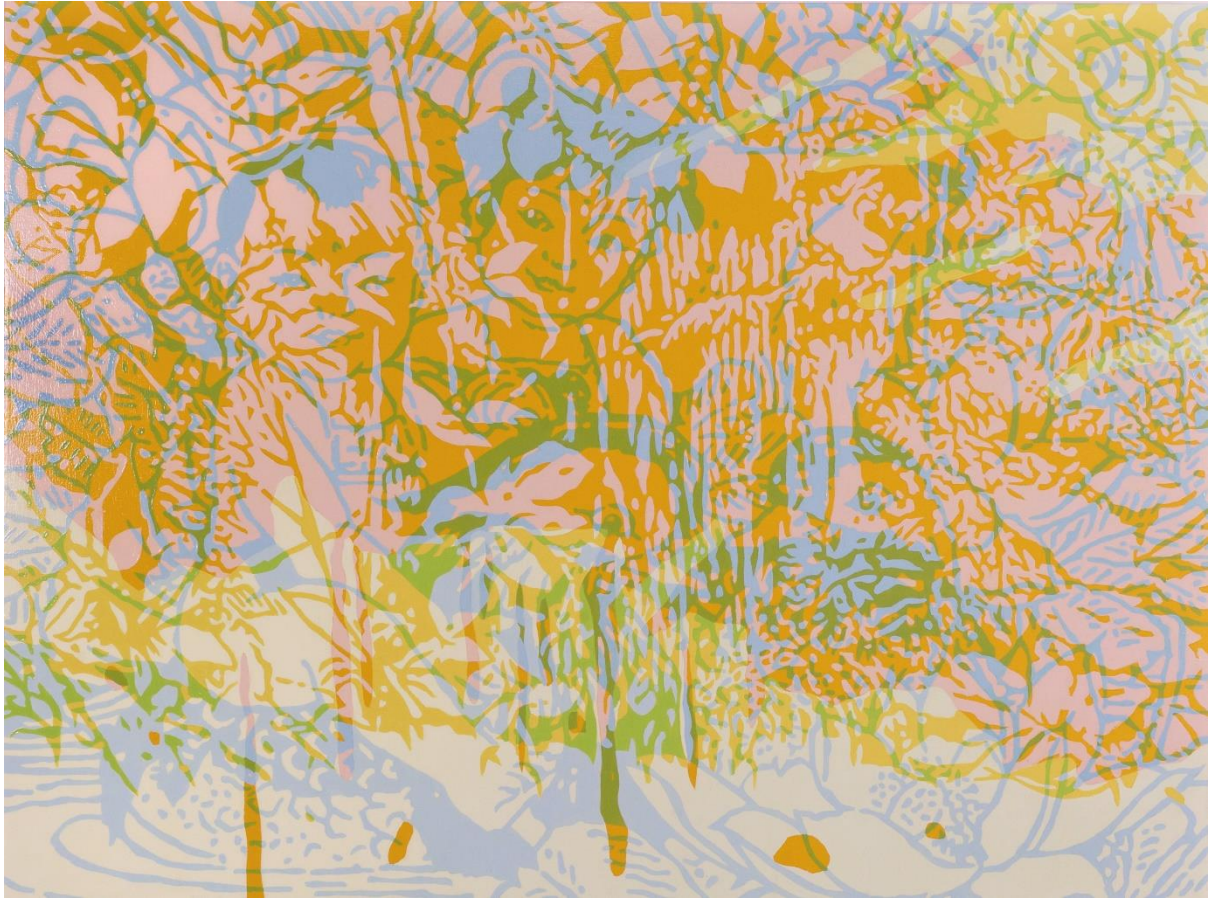


520 Happily Ever After



When pronounced in Chinese, 520 (wǔ'èrlíng) sounds similar to the phrase *I love you* (wǒ ài nǐ). Therefore, the number 520 became an online slang used by the Chinese as a shortcut to express love, similar to 'ILY' in English. This word then came to be associated with the date May 20th (5/20), which made it a meaningful day linked with love.

Love is symbolised in the painting by two child figures. Next to them are two Mandarin ducks, or what the Chinese call *yuānyāng*, where 'yuan' and 'yang' stand for male and female. Mandarin ducks are believed to be lifelong couples, thus regarded as a symbol of affection and fidelity. The cow signifies land, and is therefore a sign of prosperity.

6 May You Have a Smooth Sailing



The 'Maneki-Neko' is a common Japanese figurine of a cat which is also popular in Chinese culture nowadays, believed to bring good luck to the owner. The cat has a paw raised with constant beckoning gesture, allowing the flow of good fortune. Luck and prosperity are also represented here by falling golden coins and spinning pinwheels. In traditional Chinese culture, the pinwheel is believed "to turn one's luck around", and is therefore used commonly to welcome a new year or chapter.

In the centre of the image is a lantern containing two Koi, a type of fish recognised for its perseverance, as seen in their determinative struggle upstream. Koi is also believed to bring good fate and happiness to a family. Underneath is a ship with the number '6', a fortunate number mainly meaning smooth or well-off.

13 Safe and Sound



In these uncertain times, the artist finds it important to have a sense of security. Two dogs sit in the centre of this painting, signifying safety and comfort. Dogs can also represent family members and friends who are loyal – who will always be there to support you.

These dogs can also be considered as the artist's personal adaptation of Chinese guardian lions; a pair of mythological creatures in the form of sculptures, commonly used as architectural ornaments to protect a space from harm and threat.

'13' is one of the lucky numbers as its pronunciation is similar to "assured growth". Similarly, mountains, as featured in this painting, signify a lifetime growth.

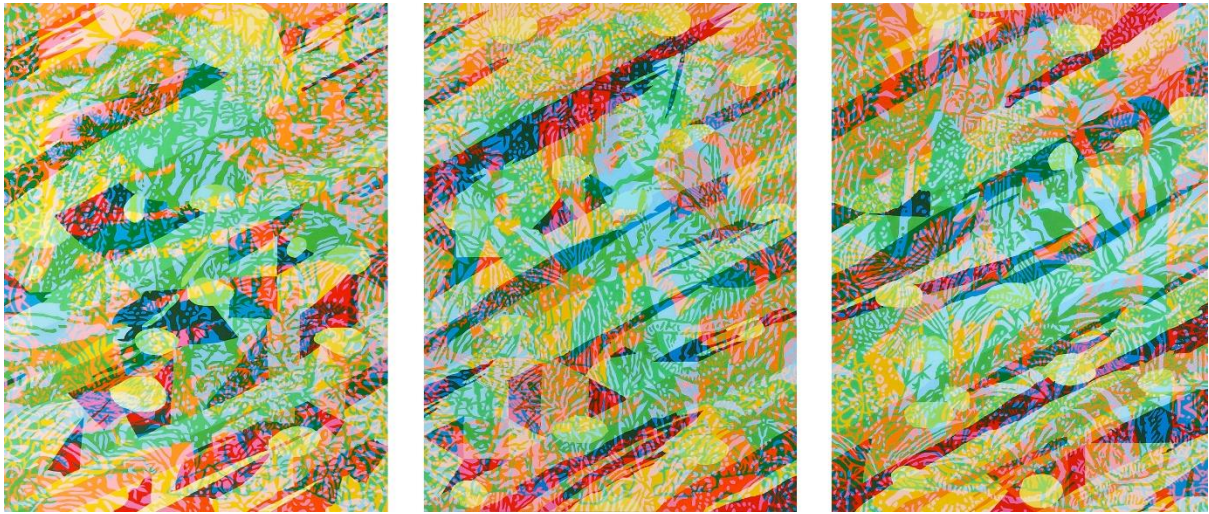
19 Eastern Sea, Southern Mountain



There is a custom in traditional Chinese culture of wishing a person “happiness as immense as the Eastern sea, and longevity as long as the Southern mountain,” usually on one’s birthday. This saying inspired the title of this piece, as the artist highlights the hope for a long and joyful life. The idea of a long life is also symbolised through an illustration of a turtle, considered as a sacred creature that holds mythical power, also known for its patience and wisdom. Next to it is placed a Chinese pagoda, a holy place that marks faith and hope.

In Chinese, the number ‘19’ is pronounced similar to “forever”. It is therefore considered a lucky number to signify permanence or eternity.

168 Prosperous Landscapes



Every canvas in this triptych represents one number in ancient Mandarin characters. Individually, each of these numbers unfolds different significance: '1' (whole), '6' (smooth) and '8' (wealth). Similar to these meanings, '168' can be translated as "rich all the way". In other words, when combined together, these three numbers depict an ongoing prosperity.

This painting also features multiple birds, similar to many traditional Chinese paintings. According to the Chinese belief, birds are signs of life and positive energy, as only when there are water and food in a place, would birds make it their home.

The Yearning Realm



This painting is the first of the series and offers mainly two images and a pair of numbers. The first shows a pair of siblings as symbols of love. The saying 'family is life' is a concept that holds true in Chinese culture. In fact, several Confucian thoughts are based around the family. Children are highly valued within a family structure, and I considered as a good luck. The second image is a basket of fish, fruits, vegetables and paddy, representing a healthy and prosperous life.

In Mandarin, the number '2' means easy whereas the number '8' represents prosperity. Thus, when these two numbers are combined together as '28', it would indicate an "easy" flow of good fortune. The number '2' could also be understood as double, hence "double wealth".

7 Rising Stars



'7' is known to be a lucky number in many cultures. In Chinese belief system, the number sounds like both (qǐ), which means "start" or "rise", and also (qì), which means "vital energy". The number also holds a special meaning for relationships and the Qixi Festival, falls on the 7th day of the 7th month of the lunar calendar. This day of love is based on an ancient folktale, a love story between the weaver girl and the cowherd. As their love was not allowed, they were to remain at opposite sides of the Silver River – however, on the 7th of July of every year, a flock of magpie birds would form a bridge to reunite the couple.

The artist also includes a pineapple arising from the grown, as a symbol of growth. Next to this pineapple are two peacocks, playing the role of guardians.

5 Lucky Connections



The paintings featured in the show are accompanied by an installation work consisting of 5 arrangements of flowers and objects. This work is an adaptation of the “bouquets” that are commonly used as decorations or gifts during the Chinese New Year celebrations. The artist aims to incorporate them as part of his research and observation on the Chinese kitsch culture. Mundane and decorative objects are arranged into multiple compositions that explore various Chinese superstitions.

Each element in the arrangements upholds a particular value or meaning: fruit (fruitful life), coin (wealth), calculator (income), bowl (steady job), cherry blossom (connections, and partner), scoop (effort), ant (‘ma yi’ means ant but also “one million” in Chinese), peanut (money), rice basket (full), etc.