What happens after hours, when work is done and day folds into night? For my thesis I looked at the nightlife subculture of my hometown Shanghai, and the dramas cultivated in its closed environments.

These paintings are interpretations rather than representations of my memories. They offer glimpses into my experiences with Shanghai's nightlife subculture by recreating its moods and energies. They visualize and express the erratic moods and atmospheres, and the haywire devolution of individuals in nightlife environments.

I use an expressionistic style, employing brushwork, colors, and surface textures to evoke the emotions and atmospheres I have encountered. Using photographs collected over the years for reference, I depict different characters through phases of a “night out.” Smaller still lifes depict details, such as the food people eat both in and outside of the nightlife venues. Larger-scale works overwhelm and distance the viewer, much as I remember being overwhelmed and alienated in the midst of a loud, overpowering, almost demonic nightlife crowd. Distorted perspectives disorient the viewer with a nonsensical world in which people do not always get what they deserve, and may even end up with a bloody nose. If the image does not make sense, it is because nightlife does not make sense, and at that moment, life itself does not seem to make sense.

My examination of Shanghai nightlife, then, becomes a means for exploring the illogic of life itself. Like nightlife, life is unpredictable and filled with diverse characters who are potentially violent and corrupt. The irrationality of nightlife, and its echoes in real life, are all part of my own Shanghai nightlife story.

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