



© Jen Liu

## The Pink Detachment

### Jen Liu

2015, single-channel video installation, color, 20 min., English. **Producer** Jen Liu (New York, USA). **Written and directed by** Jen Liu. **Director of photography** Maria Rusche. **Production design** Jen Liu. **Costumes** Jen Liu. **Sound** Jen Liu. **Music** Jen Liu. **Sound design** Jen Liu. **Editor** Jen Liu. **With** Katharine Liu, Mayu Oguri, Eli Condon, Jasmine Hong, Nathalie Encarnacion, Maura Harris, Sorcha Fatooh, Corey Tazmania, Isabelle Zufferey Boulton.

Contact: [jenliu3@googlemail.com](mailto:jenliu3@googlemail.com)  
<http://jenliu.info>

*The Pink Detachment* is an update of “The Red Detachment of Women” (1964), a Model Opera from China’s Cultural Revolution. In the original, a beleaguered peasant girl joins an army of women to produce revolution for the masses: their ‘product’ is all-Red. Here, both protagonists and end-product are revised. The protagonists are an accident-prone worker and a ballerina-manager who has the tools to alleviate the worker’s problems. The product is pink hot dogs. Within this revised framework, portions of the original music and choreography have been preserved.

At the center of the piece is the color equation, Red + White = Pink, from which multiple parallel meanings emerge. The first is the old term “pinko,” meaning a watered down Communism, or a liberal with uncommitted Red sympathies. The second is a proposal to solve future crises in meat supply by re-valuating hot dog and sausage production as a solution, by integrating ‘undesirable’ portions of pig with the ‘desirable’ portions, embodying perfect equivalence in consumable form. And the third is pink as femininity – not as a ‘natural’ fleshy softness, but rather a synthetic, engineered (and potentially violent) hybridity.

My work starts with research-based fictions. Fictional characters, fabricated narratives, false forms of wish fulfillment, are all generated by real situations and people, historical events, and contested accounts of the past and present. Visual and aural pop cultural tropes are forced against multiple lines of archival research, in faux-accounts of the past and future.

Each body of work starts with a single idea or question, that I then group together with related ideas, linked by different types of proximity: aesthetic, cultural, historic. The primary idea often has to do with well-known proposals to “fix” society (such as: stop the \_\_\_\_\_ war, women should not be victims of violence, bring industry back to the US). Once the ideas have been selected, I find a narrative base to bind them together. In this narrative base I try to take my ideas to their extreme – with the goal of self-canceling through internal logic.

I am attracted to mediums that seem thin – paintings on paper, video, music, performances – forms that appear to be about impermanence. This is related to my interest in propaganda, posters, and sloganeering – manmade objects whose authority is subject to the transit of history, and thus contingent and prone to wide swings in meaning and value within a single lifetime. I use historic conventions of beauty and design the way they are used in wider culture: surfaces simultaneously reveal and obfuscate underlying structural problems.

Since 2011 I’ve been working on multiple bodies of work loosely grouped as “The Humours,” based on the four biological humors (yellow, black, red, and blue), each conceived as “proposals for new life”. For Yellow, I re-filmed a 1977 Baldessari video as a giallo/yellow film, a genre of Italian B-horror. In Black, I tracked America’s desire for a return to industrial production as an absurdist fantasy: the black of soil, smoke, and steel. (...)

Now in Red, I began with a re-imagining of “The Red Detachment of Women” (1964), a propaganda ballet from China’s Cultural Revolution. I’ve reframed it to reflect on the conditions of female labor in China today – particularly as workers within industrialized pork production. Food, national identity, personification of animals, and factory efficiency all come into play within the greater question of historical continuity, the preservation of a traumatic past through revisionism, and women’s role as social component. In 2015, “The Red Detachment of Women” was a choreographed performance using the music and structure of the original ballet to create a manual for modern pig slaughter. *The Pink Detachment* proposes that the only true solution to the insoluble conflict between Red (Communism) and White (Capitalist Market Reform) is Pink – embodied in the hot dog, a perfectly engineered and mass-produced equivalence, a mild sympathy with moderate commitment.

Jen Liu

Jen Liu, born in 1976 in Smithtown, USA, currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. She is a visual artist working in performance, video, and painting. She received a BA in Creative Writing at Oberlin College, Oberlin, and a MFA in Fine Arts and Integrated Media at California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, California. Her work has been shown internationally in solo and group exhibition.

#### Films

2003: *Dawn of the Alpha Genesis* (6 min.). 2004: *2304 Is a Beer Drinking Year* (6 min.). 2005: *Soldiers of Light* (3 min.). 2006: *Comfortably Numb* (12 min.). 2007: *Iron Man* (15 min.). 2008: *New Dawn Fades* (5 min.). 2010: *The Shape of Things to Come* (8 min.). 2011: *Six Colorful Tales: From the Emotional Spectrum (Women)* (17 min.), *Naked Mayonnaise the Stranger* (1 min.), *Skylab Solar Anus Repair* (7 min.). 2012: *Bottoms* (2 min.), *D.D. In The Year 0000* (9 min.), *BBBitches!* (5 min.). 2013: *Safety First (Bad, Don’t Touch, Mercy!)* (15 min.). 2014: *The Machinist’s Lament* (Forum Expanded, 18 min.). 2015: *The Pink Detachment*.