

Xia Xiaowan

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Exhibition in Beijing: 6.9.–19.10.2014

Opening: Saturday, September 6, 4–7 pm

Galerie Urs Meile is pleased to announce the opening of a solo exhibition by Xia Xiaowan. While viewers might be familiar with his earlier glass works, in this exhibition these three-dimensional works are juxtaposed with related sketches, revealing the artist's exploration and understanding of process in painting. In his earlier artistic practice, Xia Xiaowan primarily produced pencil drawings on paper. But in order to establish a more close relationship between the works and the exhibition space, and drawing on concepts developed in his earlier paintings on glass panels, Xia began in 2003 the transition from two-dimensional drawing to three-dimensional painting. These glass works, with their stereoscopic optics, broke the boundaries of two-dimensional paintings and created a strong sense of physical mass that was at the same time empty and ambiguous. The exhibition presents a selection of four representative three-dimensional works, shown together with sketches related to his artistic process, to provide the viewer with a means of understanding his transition from a traditional painting form to a three-dimensional object.

In the center of the gallery space, a glass piece combines representations of Jesus and Buddha that relate to Xia Xiaowan's earlier statue series. In terms of visual effect, the artist humorously conflates the supreme beings of the Western and Eastern worlds into one; in terms of the cultural connotations, it reflects the essence and differences between two cultures. In addition, based on the existent images, the artist continues to create a variety of figures, which are also included in the exhibition.

The human body has been an artistic research interest in Xia Xiaowan's work for a long time, and it is taken up again in *Two Persons in Water* (2012, special pencil, 26 tinted glass panels, each 6 mm thick, 60.5 × 82 cm (glass), 67.8 × 51 × 83.5 cm (framed)). By referring to the works on paper, the audience can appreciate the efforts made by the artist in exploring form; he achieves the effect of "being like something and yet not being that thing you're like," and finds the point between the true and the untrue.

Superimposing or layering a series of sketches is a formal strategy used by Xia Xiaowan. In the two-dimensional works there is already a sense of layering present, while the three-dimensional works bring this into full play. In one of the pieces, the artist combines multi-layered beards with handwritten manuscripts by Leonardo da Vinci, bringing together complex elements that explore the possibilities in creating shape.

In addition to the human body, landscape is another key theme in the artist's work. Xia Xiaowan explores the topic of space in these landscape paintings, creating a dialogue that transcends time and space with the classics of Chinese traditional art. In the exhibition, we deconstruct the piece *Chinese Ancient Landscape of Fan Kuan Linliuduzuotu* (2014, special pencil, 20 tinted glass panels, each 6 mm thick, 81.5 × 57.5 cm (glass), 88 × 59 × 47 cm (framed)) showing the glass panels one by one, and provide an opportunity for the audience to observe the three-dimensional work's components in isolation.

Born in Beijing in 1959, Xia Xiaowan currently lives and works in Beijing. His works have been exhibited all over the world. Main solo exhibitions include *Transmutations across the Space – XIA XIAOWAN Solo Exhibition* at MOCA@Loewen in Singapore in 2012; *Xia Xiaowan – Three Dimensional* at Galerie Urs Meile Lucerne Gallery in 2010; and *How do You See with Your Mind & Body? Xia Xiaowan's Works on Paper* at the Today Art Museum in 2003. Recent group exhibitions include *Face Art Exhibition* at the Minsheng Museum in Shanghai in 2012; and *Reshaping History – China from 2000 to 2009* at the China National Convention Center (CNCC) in Beijing, China in 2010.