

# Miao Miao

## *Magic Carpet*

July 30–August 27, 2022

Fuschina 79 (Entry Tschuffa), Ardez

Thursday–Saturday, 3–6 pm or by appointment

Opening: Saturday, August 6, 2022; 4–7 pm

Under the title *Magic Carpet*, Galerie Urs Meile is showing a solo presentation of the Chinese artist Miao Miao (\*1986) in its pop-up exhibition space in Ardez. Her enigmatic works on paper and canvas - which can be seen for the first time outside of China in this exhibition - are characterized by unusual compositions, a hypnotizing use of colors and forms, and surprising pictorial ideas.

Miao Miao's work is characterized above all by her intuitive and courageous approach, which moves outside any norm and entrenched visual modes of representation, rather than coming from the classical educational path via an academy, as is usually the case in China. For Miao Miao, painting is not a cognitive choice, but a natural way to represent the world and express her point of view. Her works are often inspired by a particular moment in life, a specific color, impression, action, or thought, which can certainly prove challenging for viewers. Thus, some representations seem randomly combined - resembling a hodgepodge of things - making them difficult to interpret. However, the artist does not want or demand a complete decoding. At the same time, this kind of presentation reflects a superimposition of space and time that is enormously important for Miao Miao's creative development. Thus, by reproducing episodes of her everyday life, the artist attempts to create a reconstruction of time and space in her own mind through her paintings, and in the end presents a kaleidoscope of this vision.

A distinctive feature of Miao Miao's approach is that she extremely rarely makes sketches as models to study compositions or forms. In the words of the artist herself, "Painting today should be easier, at least for me it's not hard, although sometimes there are challenges, but I still enjoy the part that's mine." There is no predetermined allegory, no preconceived form. The ideas for the paintings usually come from the artist's daily life, and many things simply grow out of the canvas as she paints. They construct a kind of narrative that often leads from one to another, but it is not fixed in advance, but gradually emerges during the painting process.

Miao Miao's painting shows her way of seeing the world. This is an overlay of bright blocks of color and simple shapes, such as recurring spheres, flakes, and book pages. Miao Miao's paintings can be seen as a distortion and reordering of time, in which a span of time can be compressed unchecked and a single second stretched infinitely. Her interest is solely in maintaining and refining the relationship of time, but in the final expression, time is often staggered or twisted while the real scenes of life are erased.

In the first room of the exhibition, visitors face *Stubborn Angel*, 2021 (acrylic on paper, mounted on aluminum dibond, 2x 159.5 x 120.2 cm). This painting shows a scene in which two women are waiting for a bus and who the artist observed on the streets in Nanning. However, the figure depicted is more like a being with one body and two heads, both of which have different things in mind. In reality, both women seemed absorbed in themselves and perceived neither their surroundings nor the artist. They seemed to be completely detached, as if everything around them had nothing to do with them, until the bus arrived. In the background of this scene, the artist noticed a shopping mall named "Stubborn Angel". It seemed to have something to do with the status of the two women. According to Miao Miao, words she reads in the scenes of life (characters, texts, conversations) subtitle the images of daily life, like a huge, sprawling, disjointed, but imaginative film.

*Book-browsing Time*, 2020 (acrylic on paper, mounted on aluminum dibond, 2x 159,5 x 120,2 cm) is characterized by warm, earthy tones and a calming aura, abruptly evoking the feeling of being in the middle of a living room. The center of the picture is dominated by a switched-on floor lamp, whose glow falls softly on its surroundings. Only at second glance does the clutter surrounding the lamp become clear: the legs of an overturned table rise insect-like into the air, open books and their pages lie scattered in the scenery, figures not clearly discernible are depicted in various poses.

It is not clear whether the scene takes place indoors or outdoors. It was inspired by a garbage disposal station in the artist's neighborhood, but it is hard to tell because it is distorted in scale and proportion. The ubiquitous form of the book pages emphasizes the close relationship between the figures and tells a mysterious story.

Literature, language and rhythm play an important role in Miao Miao's oeuvre. These themes can be found again and again in her works. The overlapping and interpenetration of time and space sometimes takes place not only in a single painting, but also in the successive creation of several paintings. A motif or form from one work reappears in a later work. The previous painting inspires the subsequent one, and the latter finds clues and links in the previous work.

The title of the exhibition, *Magic Carpet*, the namesake of a series of paintings by Miao Miao, has a certain referential significance here. Not only is it a visual language that occurs frequently in the three works in the series, but it also hints at a common thread throughout the exhibition. It serves as a metaphor - the magic carpet offers a possibility and creates a place of promise where time and space can be freely interwoven through the artist's creations. They embody the artist's ultimate exploration of their intertwined forms. Beginning with the blue *Magic Carpet*, 2021 (oil, wax, pigment on canvas, 100 x 100 cm), the image of the carpet is clearly visible. Although the background of the painting has been reduced, the figure placed on the carpet still suggests a sense of movement, moving through a specific time-space structure. Until the red *Magic Carpet*, 2021 (as above), the artist continues to abstract from any references to people and objects. The sense of direction is further disrupted and the rapid flow of time stretches and distorts the structure of forms in space, rendering the scene almost unrecognizable. Finally, with the yellow *Magic Carpet*, 2021 (as above) the parameters of time/space are almost dissolved, leaving only abstract structures and shapes that are interwoven.

The large fields of color are probably the first perception most people have of Miao Miao's paintings. She chooses colors mostly out of intuition, to describe or simulate feelings. "The process of using colors is mostly conscious and rational, but my paintings are still generally driven by intuition," Miao Miao says. Moreover, a deep understanding of materials is an important trait of the artist. As a result, she has been invited by several major art academies to give lectures on the subject. For her, the properties of the individual painting materials, more precisely the pigments, have a great influence on her work. Their characteristic texture, as well as the question of how to expand and enhance this texture, are among the core issues Miao Miao deals with. For example, the artist adjusts the ratio of wax oil and pigment to produce a chalk-like paint, which she then applies directly by hand to canvas or paper. In this way, the relationship between the artist and the painting has evolved. It's not about the artist's control over the brush - different strengths bring different effects.

Parallel to Miao Miao's painting visitors find *Instant Geography*, 2022, a series of small poems written by the artist while traveling in various places and distributed in the exhibition space, printed on small cards. You are invited to read the poems aloud, to record them, and thus to complete the work in a participatory and conceptual way. Thus, *Instant Geography* essentially constitutes an instant sound work. As one walks through the exhibition, one occasionally encounters these poems translated from Chinese into Romance or English, crossing semantic distances and barriers. They are episodic readings in a particular place, as if you were opening a book in a bookstore and reading a few sentences, studying a menu in a restaurant, or deciphering the words on a billboard on the street. They mark a momentary convergence of different times and places, created together by the artist and the visitors. You are welcome to take the cards with you.

Miao Miao (b. 1986, born in Henan Province, China, currently lives and works in Tianjin, China) graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts, Henan University, China, in 2009. She focuses on her painting and researches on art materials. At the same time, she teaches courses on painting at Tsinghua University, Renmin University of China and Central Academy of Fine Arts. Her works revolve around the interior and exterior of everyday life, dominated by color and form, and blend with literature to articulate chaos.

Recent exhibitions in which Miao Miao has participated are: *Spring Fever*, Platform China, Beijing, China (2021); *Tangle of Revolution and Political Soul*, Shanghai Gallery of Art (SGA), Shanghai, China (2021); *Tongue in Cheek*, Dangxia Art Space, Blanc Art Group, Beijing, China (2022); *The Crescent and the Full or a Dichotomy of the Sunrise*, Inside-Out art museum, Beijing, China (Residence/Curation Project) (2022); *Grass*, Box Museum, Foshan, China (Residence Project) (2022); *Magic Carpet*, Galerie Urs Meile, Ardez, Switzerland (2022).