

# Xie Nanxing

You Can't See Me

Exhibition in Beijing: 2024.11.16–2025.1.26

Opening: Saturday, 16 November 2024, 4pm

Galerie Urs Meile Beijing is pleased to announce Xie Nanxing's solo exhibition *You Can't See Me*. The exhibition will highlight his most recent works, *Untitled (Slightly Faster)* (2023) and *Untitled (Slightly Slow)* (2023).

The representational nature of Xie Nanxing's paintings lies in his consistent depiction of what he perceives with the utmost vividness. These situations include visual phenomena glimpsed in an instant, as well as their origins and evolutionary paths. The meticulous exploration and layering of realistic elements render the subjects in his painting nearly unrecognizable. This "vividness" is retained in a hollowed-out manner—generally speaking, "hollowing out" refers to a detachment from the real world; in architectural terms, it alludes to the structural foundation underlying a building. His paintings hold a captivating allure for the audience. The occasional elusiveness or outright absence of the painting's subject opens up a vast expanse for interpretation. Yet, the freedom offered by his paintings is often disconcerting and compels the viewer to linger.

The triptych *Untitled (Slightly Faster)* addresses intrinsic issues within the realm of painting, specifically how to shape form so that it genuinely reflects both content and atmosphere. In this process, the yearning to convey real-world concerns is interwoven into the canvas as an invisible thread. In the left panel of the triptych, a green-hued body stands at the center of the swirl in the picture, with his face mere inches from two fingers pinching a flat smartphone, while the other hand holds a robust flower stem like an arrow. The petal-like paper scraps (or rather, petals like pieces of paper) are scattered around with "policing alert" written on them. The image presents a dazzling centrifugal rotational dynamic. This effect is not only due to the curvature of black or red edge lines outlined by the artist but also stems from the layer-upon-layer covering method employed in constructing the images. The underlying paint falls into a depression in the center of the image. Despite the minimal variation in the thickness of the paint, it creates a disturbing illusion of depth. The recessed space reflects back at the viewer like an abyss, resonating to the theme of this painting—unpermitted gaze and surveillance.

This contrasts sharply with the two faces in the right panel of the triptych: gray faces exude expressions of satisfaction and euphoria, thickly suspended against an amber background. Yet, their facial features are attached to clay-like substances, forming a sense of heaviness, which is completely opposite to their excited and soaring spiritual state. The central panel spreads out almost evenly, filling the entire canvas. Ambiguous figures also reveal sickly gray-blue and gray-purple colors—the color of bruises. If one were to browse this painting "slightly faster", as suggested by the tempo marking in the title, akin to Mozart's *Turkish March*, viewers are thrust into the dramatic clash brought about by its tense rhythm. The recurrent imagery fluctuates between scenes of groups kneeling in worship and neatly arranged teeth. When perceived as bodies, their supple, compliant posture easily evokes feelings of oppression and humiliation. When interpreted as lines of teeth, the canvas seems to reverberate with screams. In either case, these bodily elements are considered containers carrying contradictory desires—obsessed with the security offered by collective engagement while striving for fleeting moments of personal sanctuary. Amid the secondary instincts shaped by cultural norms, individuals persist in dodging the task of self-definition, yet they hold expectations for it. This kind of tug left them covered in scars.

Similarly sized series of three paintings titled *Untitled (Slightly Slow)* progress in style with a more unified sense of completeness. The paintings are shrouded in joyful colors, like the landscape obtained when the audience gazes towards a park through their glasses stuck with colorful cellophane papers. Visitors in the park try to show off elegant walking postures or take selfies together. In everyday, warm scenes, black structures suddenly come inexplicably, disrupting the ease and comfort of the picture. After a while, the movie ends, the screen descends, revealing that the curtain was supported by some structures.

Conversely, if the black structure is taken as a prerequisite to guide narrative interpretation of the progressive relationship of the painting, it establishes the hierarchy of the various realms of the world and

the rules of “seeing” behavior at the very beginning of the painting. In the realm of the living, a similar blade that divides the order is often described as “language.” Suppose the characters encapsulated by the black frame are the four Chinese characters “Gong Yuan Yi Jiao (a corner of the park).” Like an AI-generated sequence, the image of the dancing woman and her friends taking photos unfolds. The most superficial color filter may be an additional need or a slight joke played by artificial intelligence. It lingers on the canvas with the traces of “language” that have not been cleared in time.

Whether the black frame functions as a predetermined linguistic structure, or a supporting beam behind the world’s scenery, it roughly destroys the image as a whole—the artist tries his best to present the filtered “sugar paper” in a light manner, employing contrast to intensify the strength of the roughness. The ontological query of the painting arises again: nowadays, the painting’s position is often hijacked by a systematic and clichéd yearning for interpretation, with its most precious aspect—an intrinsic depth—brutally cut away.

(Text by Yang Zi)

Xie Nanxing (b. Chongqing) currently lives and works in Beijing, China. Solo exhibitions include: *You Can't See Me*, Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing, China (2024); *Xie Nanxing: Adverb High Command*, Petzel Gallery, New York, USA (2022); *A Roll of the Dice*, Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing, China (2020); *Xie Nanxing: A Gift Like Kung Pao Chicken*, Thomas Dane Gallery, London, UK (2019); *Xie Nanxing: Spices*, UCCA Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, China (2018); Group exhibitions include: *The Generation of New Painting in SCFAI*, Art Museum of Sichuan Fine Arts Institute, Chongqing, China (2021); *Italian Renaissance Drawings: A Dialogue with China*, M Woods Museum, Beijing, China (2021); *Psychic Wounds: On Art & Trauma*, The Warehouse Dallas, Dallas, USA (2020); *Chinese Whispers 中国私语 - Recent Art from the Sigg Collection*, MAK Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Vienna, Austria (2019); Documenta XII, Kassel, Germany (2007); and the *d'APERTutto*, 48th Venice Biennale, Italy (1999) among others.