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Press Release

Xie Fan

***Dionysus's Screen***

4 July - 2 September 2023

Galerie Marguo, 4 rue des Minimes, 75003 Paris



Galerie Marguo is delighted to present Chinese artist Xie Fan's first solo exhibition in Europe *Dionysus's Screen*, on view in Paris from 4 July to 2 September 2023. Composed of a new body of oil on silk and pottery plates, the exhibition also marks the artist's first exhibition with the gallery.

In the following text, art curator and critic Fiona He walks us through Xie's decade-long experiments in painting across a variety of mediums and his constant attempt in pushing the boundaries of painting in the contemporary context.

As one of the four classical elements of nature, discovering fire led to many advances in human evolution and civilization. The ancients gathered around fires in caves and held basic tools to create art. The flickering flames ignited part of the artist's creative process amid their plays of light and shadows, allowing cave paintings to come to life like animated scenes.

Throughout history, the interactions, mutual influences, and resistance between the creator (of image) and the world, creativity, and its reception propelled artistic development. Having concluded a period of exploring the perceptibility of light and color through paintings on silk, Xie Fan embarked on a journey to rediscover the origins of painting through alternative support for the painted image, aiming at leaving traces of time from a contemporary perspective.

Xie Fan conceives the medium as the origin of painting. From cave paintings to pottery plate paintings and then to works on canvas, pottery vessels connect the past and present. The material composition of pottery plates traces back to the texture of red sandstone, which also became the primer of classical painting. When pottery painting was popularized in ancient Greece, this art form provided original evidence and configuration of Dionysus, the god of wine. The Nietzschean view of the wine god portrayed him as an icon of passion who introduced the world with inspiration, divinity, madness, joy, and even destruction.

"Although our visual experience has fully acclimatized to virtuality, I am not convinced that the virtual is the singular way of existence." Amid the encroaching virtual presence brought on by digital devices and screens, Xie Fan's quest and doubts launched him to handcrafted terracotta plates (the shape of the pottery vessels in

relation to the plates is akin to that of a globe and a map) as the support for his painted images. In the *Screen* series, the artist seeks to flatten the dimension of time through the traces it leaves behind. A seemingly no-signal "screen" reminder of an analog TV propels the viewers to search for anything familiar in their minds while the illusory nature of pareidolia plays its role.

With the numerous works under the subject "Screen", Xie Fan realized his calling to paint "photographic images", led by the spirit of Dionysus, where he could project his inner thoughts onto his own "screens". The *Screen · Mount Kailash* series depicts the iconic sacred mountain, utilizing different types of light and shadow to convey the artist's perception of color relations through an objective medium. His thoughts on establishing connections between the content of imagery with the support on which it is painted are also reflected in the contrasting dialogue between *Landscape · City* and *Landscape · Alsophila Spinulosa*. The former presents a modern cityscape with a contemporary visual quality through primitive painting language and material, whereas the latter explores ancient memories through the portrayal of *Alsophila spinulosa*, an ancient tree-fern dating to the Jurassic age, to search for the memories and traces it has left on Earth to this day.

In addition to creating different support for the painted mediums, Xie Fan intentionally applies materials according to their physical properties. For example, the use of gold foil accentuates the interplay of light and shadow, further highlighting the inherent characteristics of the image in series such as *Flame* and *Golden Sea*. The layers of brushstrokes and forms float above the pottery plates and become more abstract. The contrast between the image and the underlying surface creates a juxtaposition of the virtual and the real, through which the artist seeks an emotional resonance evoked by the combination of image content and materiality.

"Materials for artistic creation have evolved from the finite to the infinite, from the tangible to the immaterial, and continue to evolve with the constant renewal of human perception and the discovery of new materials." In his recent works, Xie Fan attempts to bring image-making to a primal state of painting, akin to Dionysian impulses, who resorted to his creative instincts stemming from a subjective willfulness. Whether it's the lingering glow at dusk in *Golden Sea* or the transporting potential of traversing time in *Fern*, Xie Fan seeks to depict the sensations of contemporary life in the state of a primitive being, as one who lives in the present. Perhaps, at this moment, the artist, like Dionysus, toasts and invites Apollo to gaze upon the "screen", watching how this world, spanning across dimensions of time and space, is unfolding.

## About the artist

Having concluded a period of exploring the perceptibility of light and color through paintings on silk, Xie Fan embarked on a journey to rediscover the origins of painting through alternative support for the painted image, aiming at leaving traces of time from a contemporary perspective. Xie Fan attempting to take the language of painting as a subject to reflect on its resonance with nature and history. The artist fires these clay panels like artificial rocks; while the painting process is innovative, it recalls a time of the past.

Xie Fan (b.1983, Jianguo, Sichuan Province, China) received his BFA from the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute (SFAI) in 2005. Recent solo exhibitions include *Dionysus's Screen*, Galerie Marguo (Paris, France); *Sediment*, Sifang Art Museum (Tongren Road Space), Shanghai, China (2022); *Back To The Footlights Tomorrow*, WHITE SPACE BEIJING, Beijing, China (2014). Recent group exhibitions include *Night is the Shadow of the Earth*, Wind H Art Center, Beijing, China (2023); *A Place for Everything and Everything in its Place*, BILUNT SOCIETY, Shanghai, China (2023); *Silkroad on the Moonlight*, Gowollhun, Seoul, South Korea (2017); *Mountain Sites: Views of Laoshan*, Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing, China (2016); The Moscow Biennale, All-Russia Exhibition Centre (VDNKh), Moscow, Russia (2015); *Absolute Collection Guideline*, Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing, China (2015). Xie Fan currently lives and works in Beijing and Chengdu.

## Press Inquiries

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Xie Fan  
*Landscape · Alsophila spinulosa*, 2023  
Oil on pottery plate  
40 x 30 cm (15 3/4 x 11 3/4 in)